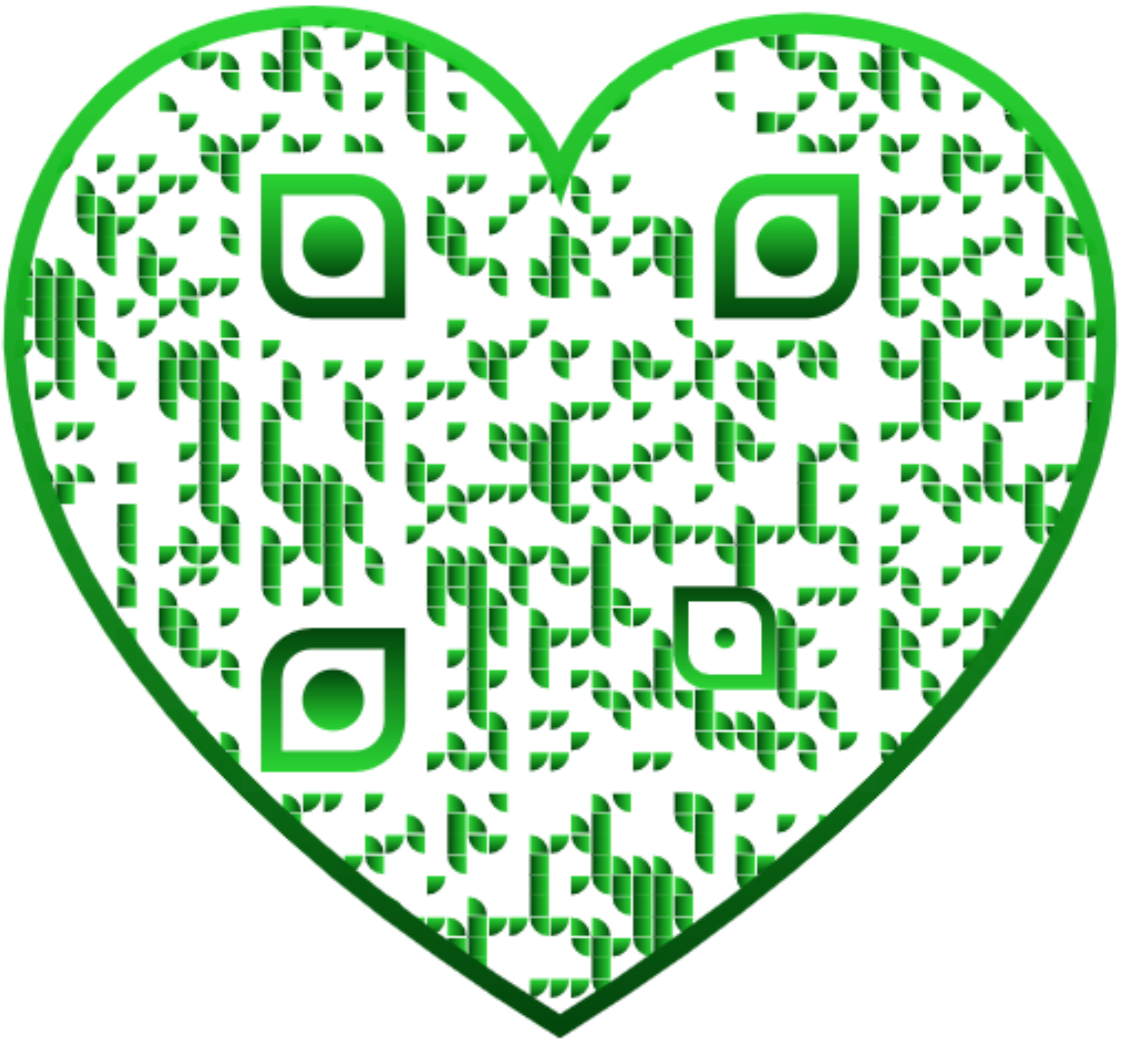
THE CRYSTAL SKULLS

Astonishing Portals to Man's Past

David Hatcher Childress

Stephen S. Mehler



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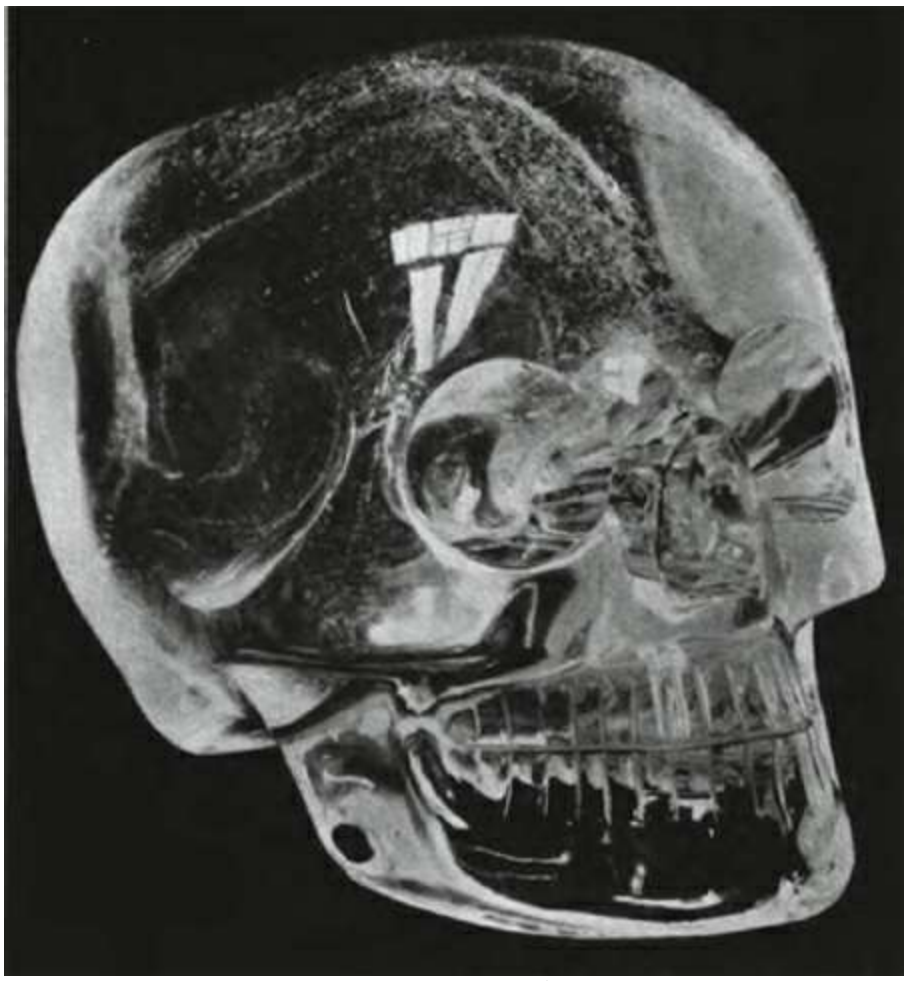
Adventures Unlimited Press



The British Museum Crystal Skull. The postcard of this crystal skull is the most poular postcard sold at the museum giftshop, although the crystal skull has been removed from display because of questions about its authenticity.

The Paris Museum Crystal Skull. It is smaller than a human head and is classified as Aztec in origin. It is thought to have adorned the end of a staff.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE
By David Hatcher Childress

1. INTRODUCTION

2. THE AZTECS & MESOAMERICA: LAND OF THE CRYSTAL SKULLS

3. THE MEXICAN EMPEROR'S MAGIC CRYSTAL SKULL COLLECTION

4. F.A. 'MIKE' MITCHELL-HEDGES AND THE SKULL OF DOOM

PART TWO
By Stephen S. Mehler

5. F.R. 'NICK' NOCERINO: THE DEAN OF CRYSTAL SKULL RESEARCHERS

6. OTHER CRYSTAL SKULLS

7. CRYSTAL SKULL RESEARCH

8. MAX, THE TEXAS CRYSTAL SKULL

9. CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PART ONE:

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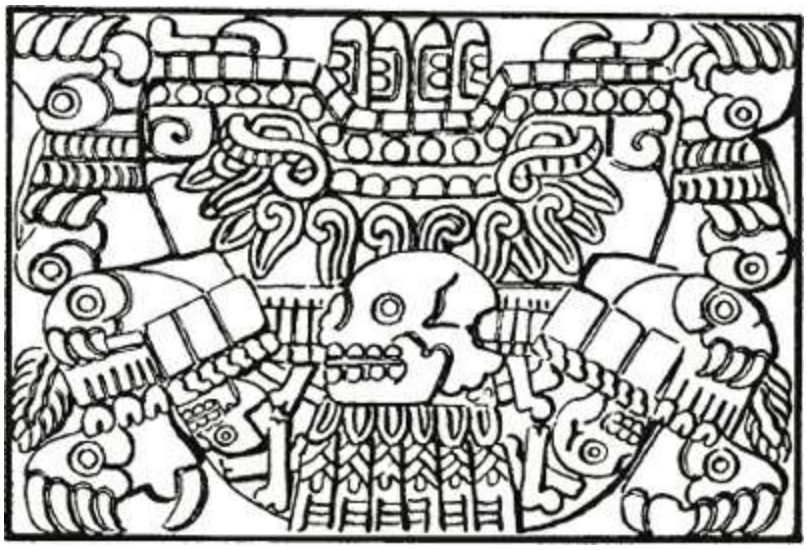


Chapter 1

Introduction

Thirteen Heavens of Decreasing Choice
Nine Hells of Increasing Doom…
And the "Tree of Life" shall blossom
With a fruit never before Known in Creation
—Tony Shearer, *Quetzalcoatl: Lord of the Dawn*

It was years ago that I first went to the lost city of Lubaantun. In 1991 I was traveling in Guatemala and Honduras, and decided to take a side excursion into Belize, the former British Honduras. The roads in the northern Peten jungle of Guatemala, where I had been hanging out with rubber-chickle gatherers known as *chicleros*, were notoriously bad. Crossing into Belize, a smaller, and wealthier country than Guatemala, I was impressed by the newly paved roads, the many shops, and the good restaurants.

My goal in coming to Belize was to examine some of the ancient ruins, especially the curious city of Lubaantun, the site where the famous Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull was allegedly found. This journey was to be the beginning of a lifelong fascination with the world of crystal skulls, ancient artifacts and Mesoamerican ruins.

On that trip, I journeyed by bus to Belize City, and then south to Punta Gorda where access to the lost city of Lubaantun could be gained. Now over fifteen years have passed, and during that time I have met several times with Anna Mitchell-Hedges and examined the famous Mitchell-Hedges skull myself.

Anna first brought the skull to the World Explorers Club in Kempton in 1995 from her home in Kitchener, Ontario with my old friend Jim Honey.

Examining the skull on the billiard table in the clubhouse, I was amazed at the clarity of the quartz crystal used in the skull, and the fact that the skull had a moveable jawbone. Knowing that the skull had been at the center of so much “psychic” activity was eerie. We took photos of the skull, with and without Anna, and marveled over it for a few hours.

Then it was time for Anna and the skull to leave. She packed it up in a light blue pillbox hat carrier that contained the skull nicely. With a few snaps, the skull was secured in the hatbox and Anna was gone, driving back east.

After she and the skull had left I was cleaning up the clubhouse, and noticed that our arcade video game, a version of Pacman, had been left on for the afternoon. I stared at the game. It was completely frozen—the screen had blanked out during the skull’s visit, something that it had never done before.

There was no doubt in my mind that the crystal skull had done this to the video game. I turned the arcade video game off, and then back on. It came back life as if nothing had happened, and worked perfectly afterward.

I sat down for a second and pondered the event. How could the crystal skull have done this? Was it just a coincidence? Had some electronic signal or field from the skull affected the quartz electronics in the video game? Something like that had certainly happened. My fascination with crystal skulls deepened.

Like my co-author Stephen S. Mehler, I own crystal skulls, though his collection is far larger. My skulls are only a few inches high, are made of relatively clear quartz crystal and look like small, classic “Aztec” skulls. I have seen skulls nearly identical to them in the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, and other museums, but mine are not ancient.

They were probably carved in the last ten or twenty years, most likely out of Brazilian quartz crystal. I bought one in Peru, and another near Santa Fe, New Mexico. My crystal skulls do not have names (yet, anyway).

As the reader will discover throughout this book, there are genuine enigmas associated with crystal skulls, and many widely varying claims. Some claims seem outlandish, while others would seem to make sense—but aren’t necessarily true either! Studies of crystal skulls run from exacting scientific testing and examinations to bizarre psychic readings that could never possibly be proven. Much of the material on crystal skulls may be

fabricated or deceptive, and the age and origins of the objects obscured—but one thing is for certain: crystal skulls are real!

Quartz is the second most abundant mineral on the Earth, after feldspsar, and has been found in meteors. It is a large component of sand and sandstone, and is part of almost every rock, be it igneous, metamorphic or sedimentary. It is the main mineral in most gemstones, including citrine, jasper and agate. Pure quartz is colorless, but traces of other minerals will color quartz, making it white, rose, smoky, milky, or a purplish-amethyst. Amethyst quartz is colored purple by the element Lithium, the same Lithium used to treat persons who are bi-polar or manic-depressive.

Quartz is extremely hard rock, with a Mohs scale of mineral hardness of 7. Topaz has a hardness of 8 and Corundum a hardness of 9. Diamonds have a hardness of 10 on the Mohs scale, the hardest mineral known. Diamond-tipped tools or diamond dust are typically thought to be the instruments used to make most crystal skulls, since diamonds are one of the few minerals that exceed quartz in hardness.

Quartz is made up of a lattice of “silica tetrahedra” and ideally forms into a six-sided prism terminating with six-sided pyramids at each end. Quartz crystals can grow together and become intertwined and therefore show only part of this shape, looking like a giant crystal mass. But the underlying crystalline structure, one in which internal patterns of molecules are regular, repeated and geometrically arranged, gives quartz many of its interesting properties, and makes it possible for one to believe that crystal skulls may be the depositories of ancient wisdom.

In the book *The New Conspiracy Reader*, authors Hiddell and D’Arc state the following:

> The ability of crystals to store information is now widely known. According to the September 4, 1994, issue of *Newsweek*, Stanford University physicists have demonstrated the first fully digital model of a device that stores information as a hologram within the subatomic structure of a crystal. The scientists were able to store and retrieve a holographic image of the Mona Lisa. The particular crystal held only 163 kilobytes of memory, but it is expected that these holographic units could store up to one million megabytes. The short article says that crystals store information in three dimensions and could be ten times faster than the fastest systems currently available.

In an article about quantum computers in Technology Research News (online at trnmag.com) Eric Smalley reports that a research team from the US and Korea had succeeded in storing a light pulse in a crystal, and then reconstituting it. This was significant because quantum information is notoriously fragile, and the ability to store it in a crystal would advance the feasibility of building a quantum computer (which would theoretically work at far faster speeds than are now possible). Such a feat had been accomplished using gases as the storage material, but using crystal would increase both the volume of information that could be stored and the length of time it could be stored; crystal could also be integrated into other systems much more easily. Smalley describes the process as follows:

> The researchers fired a control laser beam into the [yttrium silicate] crystal's atoms in order to overload them with photons. At the same time, they sent a weaker pulse of light of a different frequency into the crystal. The interaction between this weaker light pulse and the crystal's overloaded atoms introduced drag, which slowed the pulse to about 45 meters per second, or 100 miles per hour. Light travels through a vacuum at 186,000 miles per second.

> When the researchers turned the control laser beam off, the slowed light pulse disappeared, but left an impression in the crystal's atoms. When the researchers turned the control beam back on, the pulse was reconstituted from the information stored in the atoms and it continued through the crystal.

Although there is much work to be done to ultimately develop a quantum memory chip, these experiments with crystal seem promising. More recent research takes the use of crystals in information processing a step further, experimenting with perhaps the ultimate material in information storage, DNA! In an article titled "'Sticky' DNA Crystals Promise New Way to Process Information" appearing in *Science Daily* (February 7, 2003), the author writes:

> A team led by Richard Kiehl, a professor of electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota, has used the selective "stickiness" of DNA to construct a scaffolding for closely spaced nanoparticles that could exchange information on a scale of only 10 angstroms (an angstrom is one 10-billionth of a meter). …
>
> [S]aid Kiehl, "With these DNA crystals, we can lay out devices closely so that the interconnects are very short. If nanoparticles are spaced even 20 angstroms apart on such a DNA crystal scaffolding, a chip could hold 10 trillion bits per square centimeter—that's 100 times as much information as in the 64 Gigabit D-RAM memory projected for 2010. By showing how to assemble nanoscale components in periodic arrangements, we've taken the first step toward this goal."
>
> Eventually, a chip made from DNA crystals and nanoparticles could be valuable in such applications as real-time image processing, Kiehl said. Nanocomponents could be clustered in pixel-like "cells" that would process information internally and also by "talking" to other cells. The result could be improved noise filtering and detection of edges or motion. Someday, the technology may even help computers identify images with something approaching the speed of the human eye and brain, said Kiehl.

More incredible research involving DNA and its crystal structure has been carried out in an attempt to solve the mysteries of the origin of life and the process of evolution. In the Introduction to their paper "Self Replication and Evolution of DNA Crystals," CalTech researchers Rebecca Schulman and Erik Winfree write:

> Is it possible to create a simple physical system that is capable of replicating itself? Can such a system evolve interesting behaviors, thus allowing it to adapt to a wide range of environments? This paper presents a design for such a replicator constructed exclusively from synthetic DNA. The basis for the replicator is crystal growth: information is stored in the spatial arrangement of monomers [simple organic molecules that can join in long chains with others] and copied from layer to layer by templating. Replication is achieved by fragmentation of crystals, which produces new crystals that carry the same information. … A key innovation of our work is that by using

programmable DNA tiles as the crystal monomers, we can design crystal growth processes that apply interesting selective pressures to the evolving sequences.

IBM has been involved in developing Holographic Data Storage Systems in conjunction with DARPA, the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency. They have been successful in storing thousands of holographic images on a single lithium niobate crystal through a process of shooting laser beams into the crystal. One beam bears the information for the object to be stored, and another beam acts as a reference beam. According to IBM's webpage, "Data is stored when the interference pattern created by the two beams changes the optical properties of the crystal within the overlap region. Multiple holograms can be stored in the same volume by varying the angles of the beams. For readout, a reference beam projected into the crystal selectively reconstructs—according to its input angle—only one of the 1,000 superimposed holograms, producing the appropriate data-bearing object beam …" They have also developed an "associative retrieval" capability, wherein a "data pattern is projected onto the top of a crystal storing thousands of holograms. The stored holograms diffract the incoming light out the side of the crystal, with the brightest spots identifying the location of the data that most closely resembles the input pattern." Clearly, this capability is of utmost importance if holographic crystals are to store huge databases that must be searched quickly.

So we see that on the cutting edge of science, crystals of various types are being used to store and process information, and success is due to the very nature of crystals themselves. Information can be stored in an orderly fashion, replicated and retrieved. Is it then so farfetched to think that a technologically advanced earlier civilization could have developed these capabilities, and perhaps used crystal skulls to record information? Or even that the same ends may have been met intuitively?

In order to make a large size crystal skull, say one nearly the size of a human skull, the crystal carver would need a pretty large piece of quartz crystal. Some quartz crystals can reach several meters in length, and weigh tons. Obtaining large, translucent quartz crystals could be very difficult,

especially in ancient times. Deposits of large crystals, of different grades, occur in Brazil, Peru, Mexico, California, Arkansas and other areas of the Americas. Deposits of large quartz crystals are also found in Africa, Europe and Asia, but much of the high quality, translucent quartz crystals today come from Brazil.

Gold and silver are often found around quartz, and quartz crystals can have beautiful gold threads inside them, having grown with the crystal. Quartz crystals have an axis of rotation and they have the ability to rotate the plane of polarization of light passing through them. They are also highly piezoelectric, becoming polarized with a negative charge on one end and a positive charge on the other when subjected to pressure. The piezoelectric properties of natural materials like quartz and salts were first discovered by the Curie brothers, Pierre and Jacque, in the 1880s when they found that these materials could convert energy between mechanical (pressure) and electrical (the charges).

Quartz crystals vibrate when an alternating electric current is applied to them, and for this reason they have proven to be highly important in commercial applications. Quartz oscillators were developed in 1921 and one early use was in phonograph needles. Their piezoelectricity also makes them ideal for use in making microphones, speakers, pressure gauges, actuators, resonators and clocks.

Quartz crystals can be synthesized by using a hydrothermal process in a device known as an autoclave. The first manmade quartz crystals were produced in 1958. These crystals are more perfect that natural crystals and are used in very high-tech industries. They are used in millions of electronic circuits, including computers.

In fact, all of the many astonishing qualities of quartz make it an ideal material for “psychic” experiments and “light” experiments. In theory, a piece of crystal quartz, or a crystal skull, could and would react to what was around it, including light, electricity, pressure, sound, vibrations of all sorts, and probably human thought waves and the human electrical field. The webpage crystallinks.com gives some insight as to how this might be possible:

> Researcher Marianne Zezelic … wrote, “Crystal serves as an accumulator of terrestrial magnetism. By gazing at the crystal, the eyes set up a harmonic relation stimulating the magnetism collected in that portion of the brain known as the cerebellum. The cerebellum therefore becomes a reservoir of magnetism which influences the quality of the magnetic outflow through the eyes, thus setting up a continuous flow of magnetism between gazer and crystal. The amount of energy entering the brain eventually increases to such a proportion as to affect the poles of the brain, a region extending just above the eyes, contributing to psychic phenomena.”
>
> Going a step further, Tom Bearden, an expert in the field of psychotronic studies, believes that, in the hands of a skilled mediator and mental focalize, the crystal skull also served not only as a vehicle to transform life field energy into electromagnetic energy and other physical effects, but also aided in healing, by the altering of its crystalline resonance to match that of a patient’s mind and body frequencies, and affecting [sic] curing energies on the skull that would manifest in the patient’s auric field. The skull should thus be used as an amplifier and a transmitter of psychic and earth energy forces.

More information of this type can be found in the writings of Marcel Vogel, an IBM researcher who spent seventeen years testing crystals and their interaction with human energy. He perfected the “Vogel-cut” of crystals in order to maximize the ability of crystals to convey psychic and healing influences. His work is perhaps best summarized in this quote from him: “The crystal is a neutral object whose inner structure exhibits a state of perfection and balance. When it is cut to the proper form and when the human mind enters into relationship with its structural perfection, the crystal emits a vibration which extends and amplifies the power of the user’s mind. Like a laser, it radiates energy in a coherent, highly concentrated form, and this energy may be transmitted into objects or people at will.”

A great number of unusual phenomena have been associated with crystal skulls. According to Frank Dorland, an art expert and restorer who studied the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull for six years, the skull would often be seen

with its eyes unusually lit up. The eyes would flicker as if they were watching the observer, and visitors reported odd odors and sounds, plus various lighting effects coming from the skull. Bizarre photographs were taken of "pictures" which sometimes formed within the skull, including images of flying discs (i.e., UFOs or flying saucers) and of what appears to be the Caracol observatory at the Toltec-Mayan site of Chichen Itza. The astonishing ability of crystal skulls to create unusual phenomena is now well known, and it attracts people of all types who want to get more information.

Crystal skulls, real or imagined, end up in the news from time to time, and everyone seems to get very excited. Christopher O'Brien, author of *Secrets of the Mysterious Valley*, relates the story of a "crystal skull" found on a ranch near Moffat, Colorado in February 1995. This caused quite a stir in the local newspapers for some time. Says O'Brien:

> The finder, Donna Koch (her real name), claimed she discovered the enigmatic six and 1/2 inch high skull in February 1995 while riding the fence-line of her newly acquired ranch. I publicized her claim, and the "alien-looking" artifact immediately captured the imagination of many, as excited word of the "find" literally circulated around the world. Channelers, psychics and true believers had a New-Age field day with the little skull. A "full-moon gathering" at the White Eagle Village attracted the curious from as far away as Arizona and Minnesota. Articles have even appeared in international publications (curiously with most of the initial facts totally wrong).
>
> I found out, contrary to popular belief, that the skull was not crafted by aliens, Lemurians, or Central American healers. The skull was created by Brad Chadez a glass-blower at the Blake Street Glass Company in Denver. "I'm really sorry it went so far," the 31 year-old Chadez told me. "My parents own the ranch next-door [to the Koch's] and we left the skull there on the northeast corner of the property as a cornerstone."
>
> "I started making the skulls to sell in New Mexico at the Day of the Dead festival," Chadez said. "My parents bought the [Moffat] ranch sixteen years ago, and they're planning on building a house on the property. We put it there a while ago as a talisman and I had no idea someone would find it."

So, the crystal skull in Colorado was actually a modern glass skull innocently placed on a ranch, but it later caused quite a commotion. And, as often happens around crystal skulls, there were plenty of psychics who wanted to get their impressions, especially as to the origins of the skull. This anecdote underlines how interesting crystal skulls are to many people They have certainly made their way into pop culture.

An abbreviated list of the appearance of magical skulls in pop culture follows (astonishingly, the list could go on and on):

TV & Film

• The long-awaited fourth film in the Indiana Jones series released in 2008 is *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

• The comic strip "The Phantom" featured crystal skulls several times. The plot of the 1996 movie based on the strip involved powerful magic skulls of jade, gold and silver, but not crystal.

• Episode 321 of the TV series Stargate SG-1 featured a crystal skull that was an artifact left behind from an ancient alien civilization. It transported people between Earth and the world of the ancient aliens that created it, and also allowed people to be sent to another if the teleportation was interrupted before it was finished

• All types of paranormal phantasms in the 1987 horror-comedy movie *House II* seek out a crystal skull with mystical powers.

• In the 2006 TV movie *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines*, the Librarian (who is the keeper of a fantastic collection of mystical and powerful artifacts collected from all ages) is seen presenting a crystal skull to the collection.

Print Media & Radio

• A crystal skull appears in several Jack Flanders radio adventures, which were presented on NPR and other stations starting in the 1970s..

• The science fiction series *Atlantis* by Greg Donegan (Bob Mayer) posits that the crystal skulls were created during a battle against "the shadow," during which the psychic energies released overcame of the priestess of

Atlantis (and her descendents) and crystallized the living bone of their skulls.

• In the novel *The Fifth Horseman: A Sleepy Hollow Legend* by Gregg Gonzalez, a crystal skull is used as a prison for the Headless Horseman's soul, and is hidden away to hopefully prevent the Horseman from rising again.

• A crystal skull played an important part in L.J. Smith's literary series, *The Secret Circle*. It was a Master Tool of the original New Salem Coven and is magically transformed in the last book to become the villain's actual skull.

Games

• A crystal skull can be found in the video game "Return to Castle Wolfenstein," as one of the secret "treasure" items.

• In an Nancy Drew PC Adventure Game released in October 2007 the titian-haired sleuth travels to New Orleans with her friend Bess to uncover a murder having to do with crystal skulls.

• In the video game "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Legend of Jack Sparrow" the title character Jack Sparrow and his friend Will Turner are captured in Panama while trying to steal a crystal skull.

• In the 2007 game "Assassin's Creed," an in-game email states that the a sect of modern Knights Templar are locating and using some of the Mitchell-Hedges skulls as secure means of communication.

• The collectible card game "Illuminati: New World Order" has a card for the Crystal Skull. *Music*

• The 2006 release *Blood Mountain* by the metal band Mastodon features a song entitled "Crystal Skull." The entire album is based on the concept of finding a crystal skull.

• An indie pop band from Seattle is named "Crystal Skulls."

• Psychedelic trance artists Raja Ram recorded two works about crystal skulls: a 2001 album entitled "The Mystery of the Thirteen Crystal Skulls", and a 2003 album entitled "The Secret of the Thirteen Crystal Skulls."

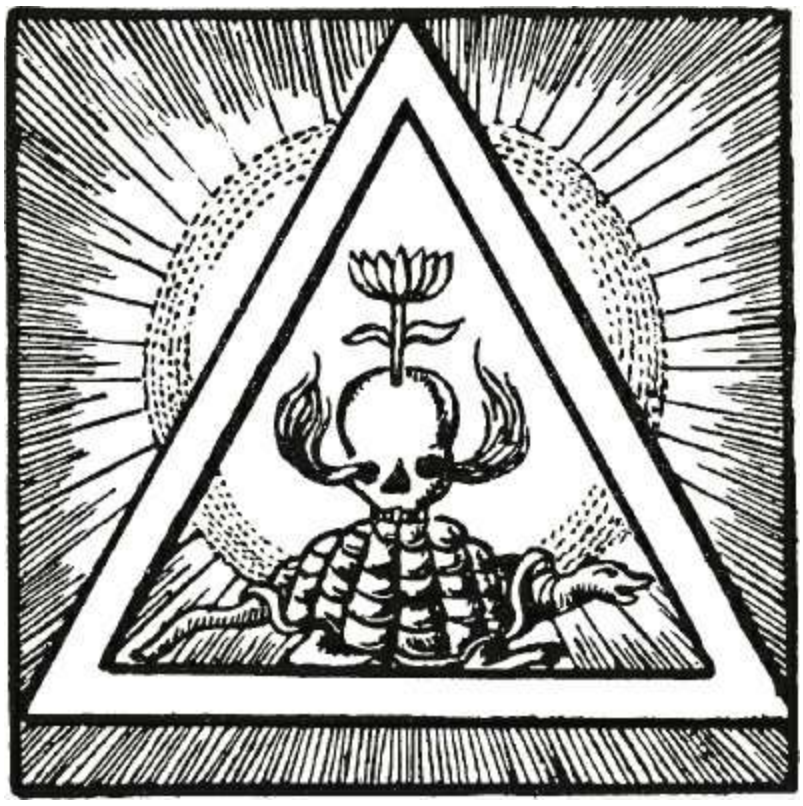
• An experimental band named Cloaks released a song called "A Crystal Skull in Peru."

This list demonstrates a widespread fascination with crystal skulls that permeates our culture. Yet the question remains, where do crystal skulls come from? Some, certainly, are bought in crystal shops where several different sizes might be lurking in some glass case. This is how I bought my crystal skulls. Today, crystal skulls can be bought on the Internet, or in oddball jewelry stores from Sedona, Arizona to Amsterdam, Hong Kong and Cuzco. Most of these crystal skulls are carved by modern jewelers using diamond-tipped drills and saws. They have been produced within a relatively short time, usually several months. One modern German crystal skull, made in Idar-Oberstein and measuring slightly smaller than life-size, took one year to create with diamond-tipped tools and was for sale in 1993 for $50,000.[22]

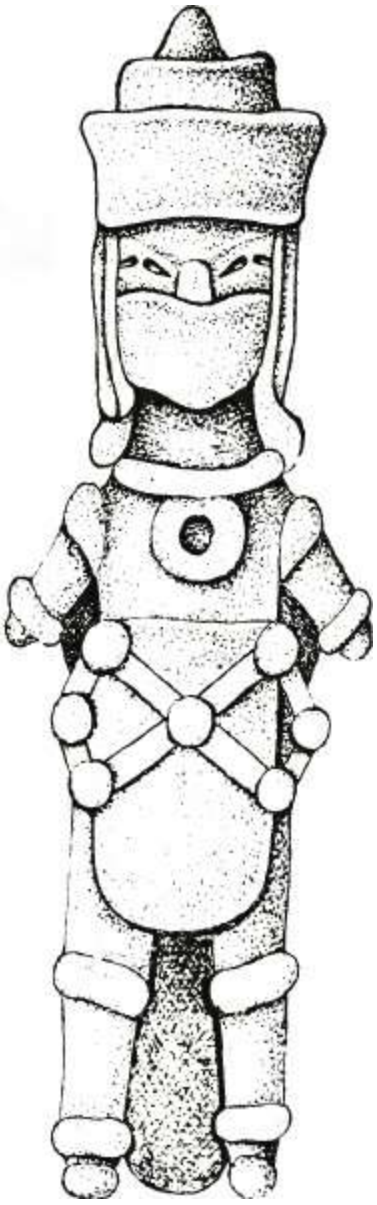
Other crystal skulls may truly be ancient, and would have taken years, or even hundred of years, to create. They may have been found in tombs that had been discovered (and looted) and then sold into private collections, pawnshops or even museums.

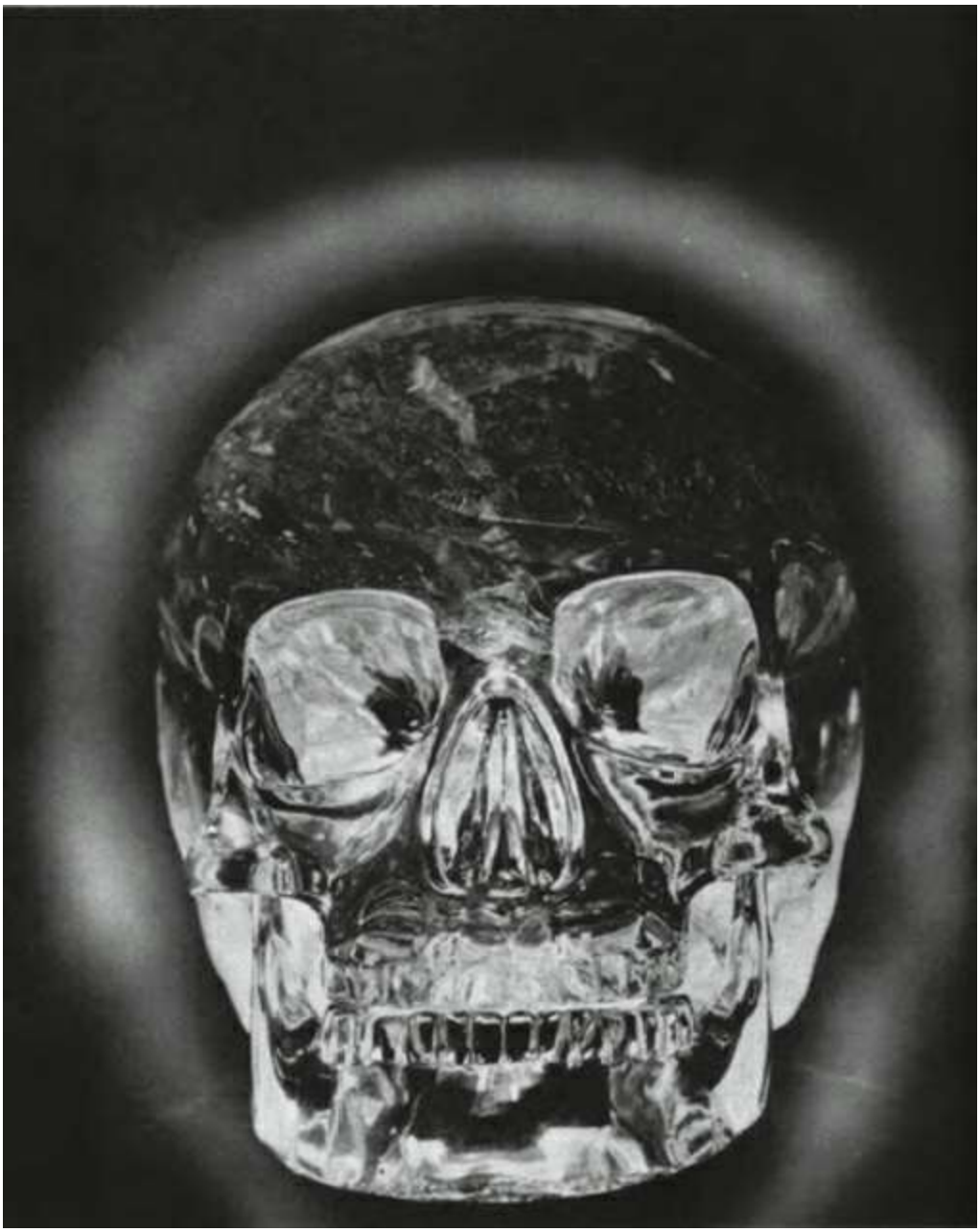
Crystal skulls may be many things—objects of deception, ancient objects, semi-modern forgeries—but because of the inherent nature of quartz crystals they embody an advanced technology. Crystal skulls are a fascinating subject indeed. We just have to remember this in our quest for the truth about crystal skulls: all crystal skulls are real—at least, they are as real as everything else.

Top and bottom: Brahmic-Tantric triangles from the Himalayas showing typical symbolism of tridents, lotus flowers and skulls.

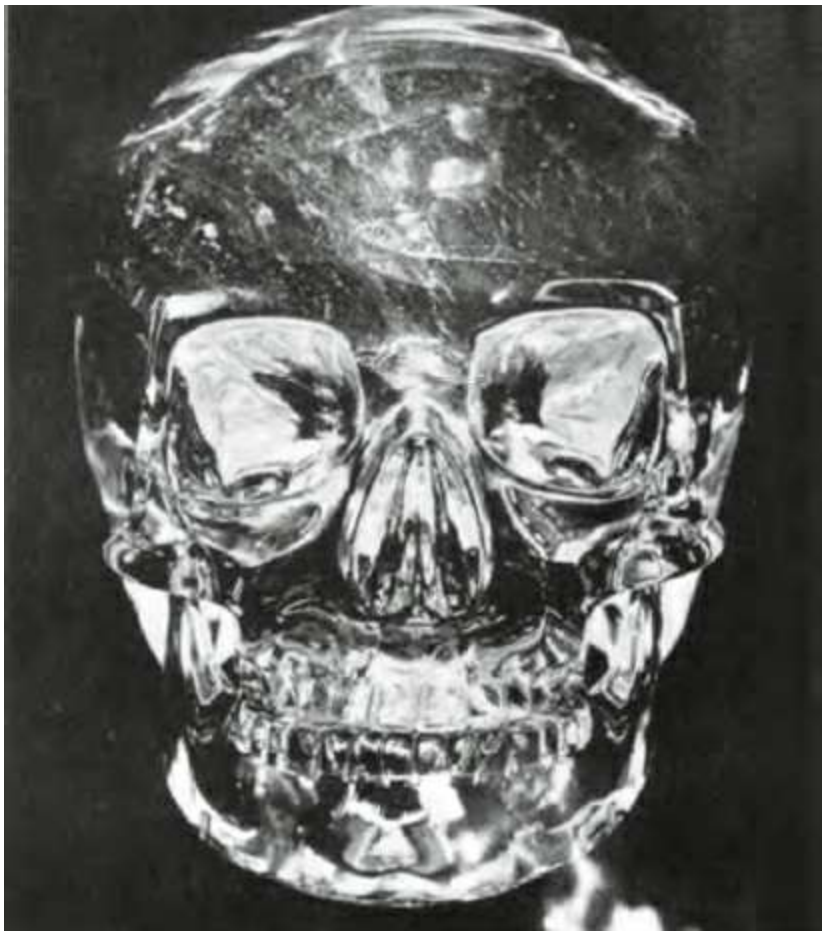


Top: Jade Olmec-Zapotec Bat found at Monte Alban, southern Mexico. Bottom: A clay statue Mexico, thought to show an Zapotec shaman. He has four eyes, and would probably carry with him crystals and psychodelic mushrooms.





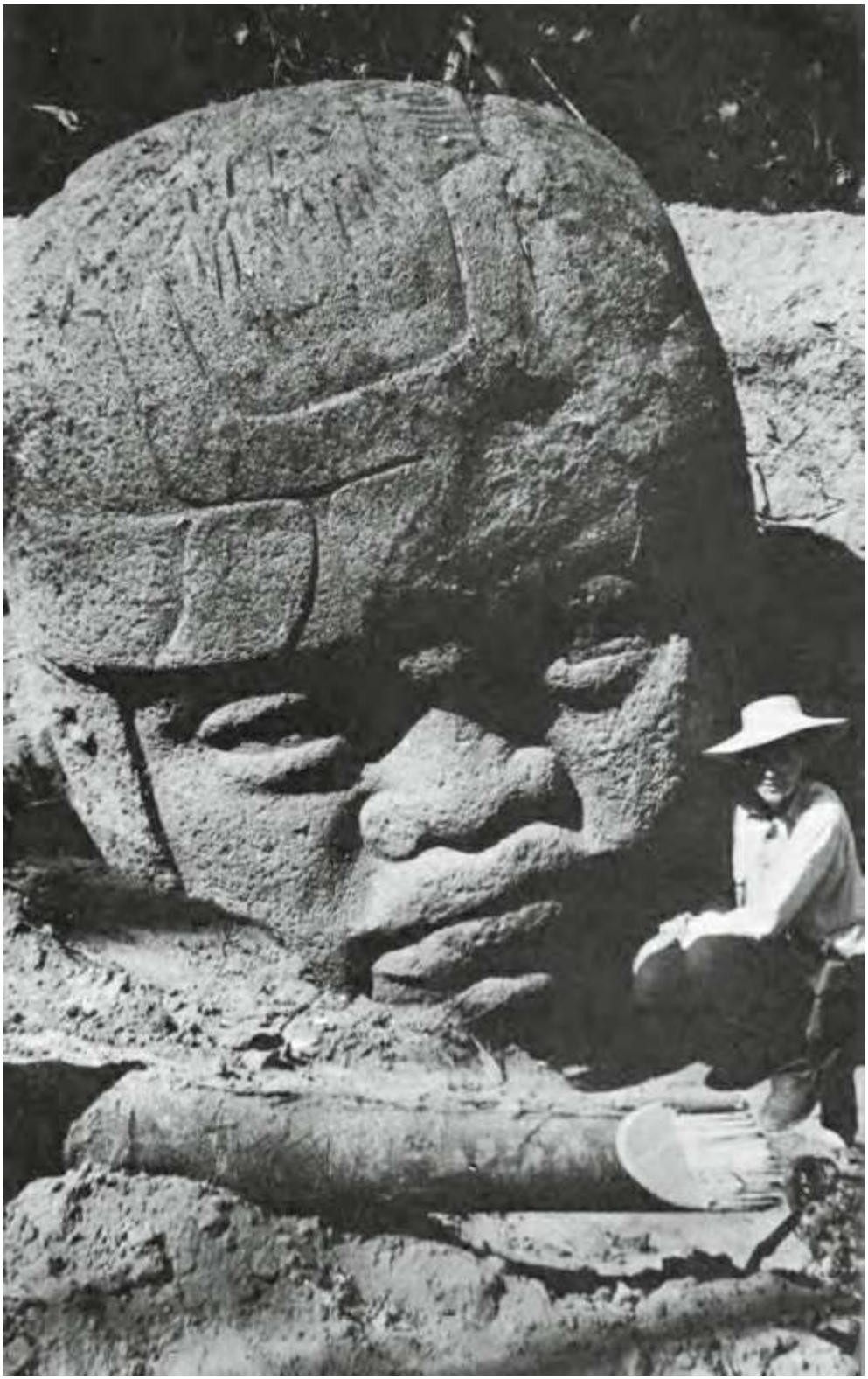
The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull, here in a photograph by Frank Dorland to simulate the aura he claimed he saw around the skull.



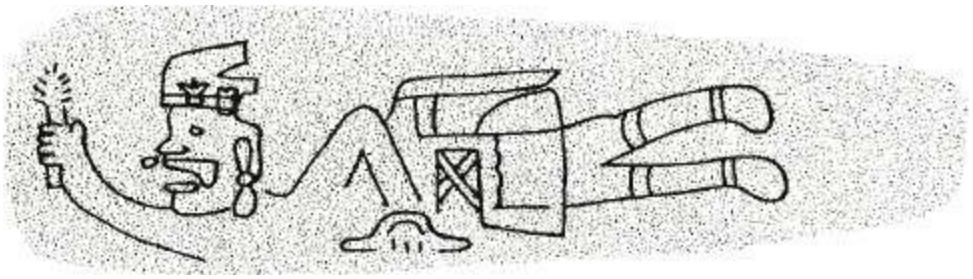
Top: The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull in a photograph by Frank Dorland. Bottom: One of the curious carved boulders at the Mayan city of Qurigua, in Guatemala. We do not know why the Mayans carved these giant boulders.

Colossal Olmec head discovered at San Lorenzo, Mexico, circa 1940. It is carved of basalt and weighs over 20 tons.

Olmec stela at Cerro la Piedra. A man with an elongated skull is making an offering to a bearded man with an elaborate feathered headress. Did their offerings include crystals?



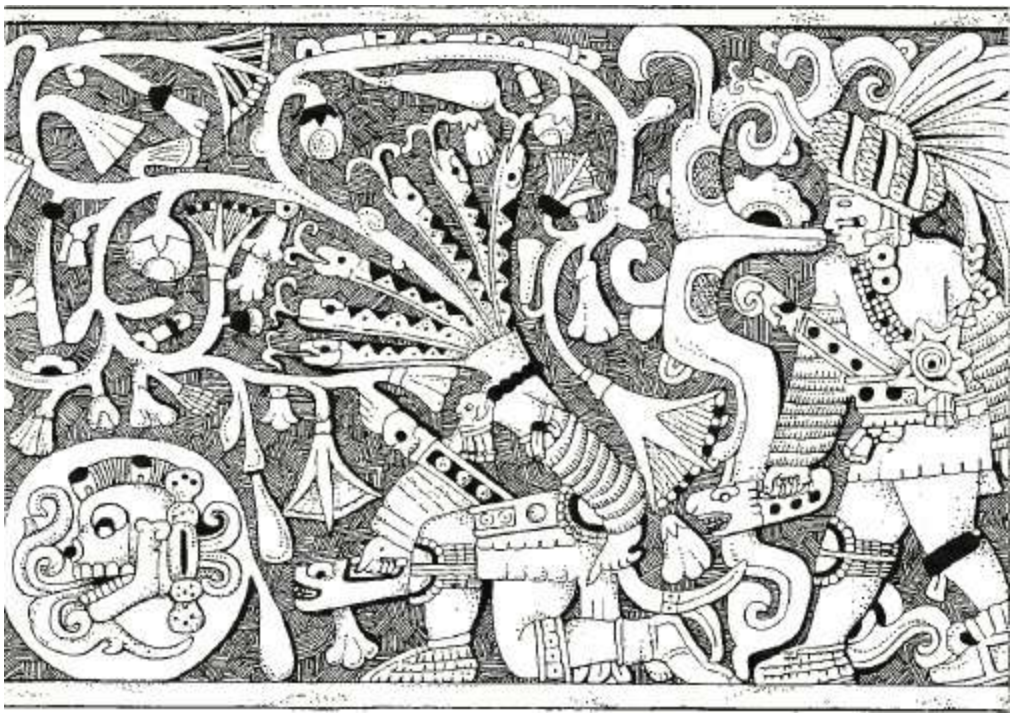
Colossal Olmec head discovered at San Lorenzo, Mexico, circa 1940. It is carved of basalt and weighs over 20 tons.



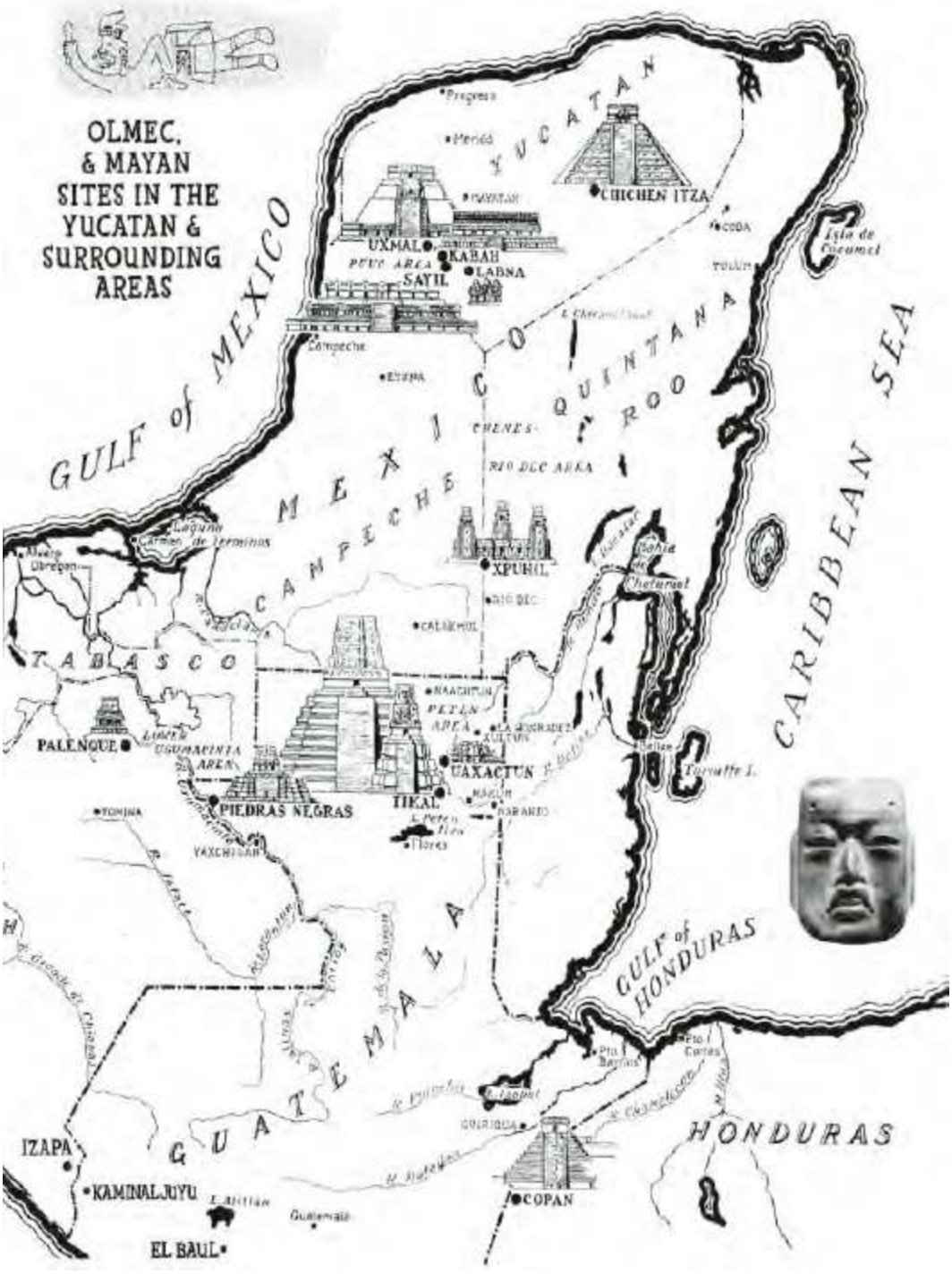
The famous “flying Olmec” carved onto a jade celt, now at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

Jade Olmec mask with the curious V-cleft. The Olmecs preceded the Maya and Zapotecs and made jade masks, statues and heads. Did they alsos Make crystal skulls?

Olmec clay figurine: Note the extended cranium.



Top and Bottom: Toltec bas reliefs of warriors with weapons, skulls and trophy heads from Chichen Itza, Yucatan.


OLMEC,
& MAYAN
SITES IN THE
YUCATAN &
SURROUNDING
AREAS
GULF of MEXICO
YUCATAN
CAMPECHE
QUINTANA ROO
CARIBBEAN SEA
GULF of HONDURAS
GUATEMALA
HONDURAS
CHICHEN ITZA
UXMAL
KABAH
SAYIL
LABNA
XPUHIL
TABASCO
PALENQUE
TIKAL
UAXACTUN
XPIEDRAS NEGRAS
COPAN
IZAPA
KAMINALJUYU
EL BAUL

Chapter 2

THE AZTECS AND MESOAMERICA:

LAND OF THE CRYSTAL SKULLS

We can trace the progress of man in Mexico
without noting any definite Old World influence during
this period (1000-650 BC) except a strong Negroid substratum
connected with the Magicians (High Priests).
—Frederick Peterson, *Ancient Mexico (1959)*

Crystals were used as magical talismans in many cultures. The Greeks considered quartz crystals to be "frozen ice," or water that had been frozen for so long that it was permanently hard. The Greek philosopher Pliny the Elder cited as evidence that quartz crystals were ultra-frozen ice the "fact" that quartz crystals could be found high up in the Alps where glaciers could be found, but not in lower places where it was warmer. Although this is completely wrong, it shows that the Greeks found quartz to be an interesting material.

In fact, the Greeks and Romans in ancient times used crystal balls, polished from rock crystal quartz, for purposes of divination. The fact that it

was difficult to find a large enough specimen to make a clear crystal ball made the objects that much more valuable and mystical.

Crystal balls were also used in Scotland. In a paper titled “Scottish Charms and Amulets” published in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (May 8, 1893), George F. Black outlines many uses to which they were put. Some were just decorative, but others were thought to cure cattle of diseases, and water in which these balls had been immersed was in great demand to sprinkle over herds. Many highland clans had crystal balls that they hung with their standards, and designated “Balls of Strength,” or “Victory Balls.”

Though ancient cultures revered crystals, the carving of quartz into skulls is thought to be peculiar to Central America and the Himalayas. Skull iconography is used frequently in Tibetan Buddhism, Hindu Tantra and among the Aztecs, Mixtecs and Mayans. Presumably by the Olmecs, as well, who preceded all these Mesoamerican cultures.

Indeed, the idea that crystal skulls are linked to powerful Hindu and Buddhist Tantric rituals seems to be well founded. Buddhist and Hindu monks have been said to stare at crystal skulls as part of their meditation. Skull iconography is widespread in Tibetan and Hindu art, and many depictions of gods wearing skull necklaces, headdresses and/or belts can be found in sculpture and thangka paintings. The necklaces are particularly associated with the creator-destroyer god Shiva, and his wrathful consort Kali who is almost always pictured wearing one. Devotees of these gods still wear skull necklaces, usually made of small skulls carved out of animal or human bone. The use of skull-shaped prayer beads, like rosaries, is common in Nepal, where the beads are often carved of yak bone.

Tibetan monks used actual human skulls to make sacred drums, and also skull cups known as Kapala. There were precise written rules as to how skulls should be prepared to serve as sacred vessels, and when they had been properly sanctified, they were used in various ceremonies. One practice was to heat common everyday items in the skulls as a symbolic gesture showing that human life and death were ephemeral, and it was best to focus on spiritual enlightenment.

In connection with these Himalayan and Tibetan skulls are jade skulls, being carved of the hard, valuable green-colored stone. There have even been entire jade skeletons, supposedly from Tibet or Mongolia, that have received quite a bit of publicity on the Internet and at gemstone conferences.

One Internet site (www.greatdreams.com) claims that around the year 2000-2001, a number of "crystal skulls were found in some caves in remote mountains. It took 2 years to retrieve 22 ancient crystal skulls, collectively known as THE BEIJING SKULLS, which possibly are linked to the Dropa." The Dropa are dwarf-like extraterrestrials who supposedly descended from the clouds when their spaceship crashed in a remote mountainous area on the China-Tibet border. They lived in caves there, and finds of graves containing their odd skeletons and discs that were presumed to hold encoded information have been reported previously. Not much more has been heard of these Chinese crystal skulls, and all of the claims surrounding the Dropa seem to require a lot more investigation and verification.

Richard Garvin, who wrote *The Crystal Skull* (1973) about Frank Dorland's research on the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull, quotes Dorland as saying:

> "It is evident that the cult of the skull or at least skull worship, has been in the past a worldwide practice among ancient peoples," Dorland says. "From the Pacific islands to Tibet, from Egypt to Mexico, skull worship is found in every corner of the globe. And it seems that almost all of this practice held the skull in extremely high esteem. It was worshipped and adored and saved and revered. The symbol of the skull as a gruesome ugly death head, seems to be most common in the last fifteen hundred years.
>
> But nowhere in the world has the skull motif had a greater importance than in the Central American cultures, both modern and pre-Hispanic. In these cultures, the skull motif shows up in an astounding variety of forms. For instance, the center of the Aztec-Calendar is a fleshless face; the Aztec god Xolotl, twin of Quetzalcoatl, had the face of a skull;

mosaic inlays of skulls were made by the Nahuas and the skull was an important thematic element in the gold work of the Mixtecs."

Indeed, the skull motif is extremely pervasive in Mesoamerica, appearing on buildings as an architectural element, in ceramics, sculptures, crafts and paintings. One of the most prevalent art forms was the mask. Masks were used in religious ceremonies, and also as decorative items, and the skull was a common theme (particularly popular were depictions where half the head is skull-like, but the other half is life-like). The British Museum has in its collection a Mexican mask made from a real human skull that they call the Oaxaca Turquoise Mask. The front is covered in turquoise and lignite mosaic tiles, and the back has been cut away and lined with leather. The jaw is moveable, hinged on the leather.

In an interesting sidenote, this mask served as an inspiration for the popular British artist Damien Hirst, who in 2007 produced the costliest piece of modern art ever made. It is a real human skull from the 18th century that he bought in London and covered with 8,601 fine diamonds. The centerpiece is a pear-cut pink diamond set in the forehead. The work is expected to sell for $100 million. This glittering piece is an interesting twist on the concept of a "crystal skull."

The Mesoamerican fascination with skulls continues today, and is most famously embodied in the celebration of the Day of the Dead. Since the imposition of Christianity, this celebration has taken place on All Hallow's Day, November 1st, but it was noted at the time of the Conquest that the Aztecs had several Feasts of the Dead. Those holidays were celebrated in much the same way as the festival is observed today: flower garlands, chocolate, fruits, candies and other foods are offered to family ancestors. Today, picnics are often held in cemeteries, and children are given little sugar skulls to eat.

Mesoamerican cultures seemed to regard death as a natural part of the lifecycle, and not something to be particularly feared; their use of skulls in art was just a reminder of the great cosmic scheme. The website mexicolore.com quotes a verse by the Aztec poet Netzahualcoyotl as follows:

Even jade will shatter,
Even gold will crush,
Even quetzal plumes will tear.

One does not live forever on this earth:
Only for an instant do we endure.

The Aztecs believed in thirteen heavens and nine levels of the underworld. The manner in which one died dictated where one's soul went in the afterlife, but souls on all levels had duties to perform to keep life on Earth going: helping bring rain, providing seeds for new growth, curing diseases, etc.

So we see the well-established theme of skulls in the cultures of Mesoamerica. But what about the actual crystal skulls? Who made them, and why (not to mention how)?

Several legends attributed to various American Indian cultures are purported to answer these questions. The most popular of these legends about crystal skulls is that thirteen life-size crystal skulls exist as some of sort special set that will be activated by being together—like bringing together all the parts of some sophisticated computer. One version of this story says that the thirteen skulls were manufactured by an advanced society that lived in the Inner Earth, and contain information on the history of that race, their relationship with ours, and our future. The skulls were scattered around the Earth, to be found and reunited at a later date. Some claim this race was extraterrestrial in origin.

Another version of the story claims to originate in the Quiche Mayan tale of creation, the book called the *Popol Vuh*. In this account, the thirteen skulls were hidden by Mayan shaman in ancient times to be rediscovered at a time of great need. They contain vital information about the origin of mankind, our true purpose in creation, and our destiny. When we are ready to receive this wisdom, the skulls will be found and decoded, and facilitate the further advancement of the human race.

The authors of the 1988 book *Mystery of the Crystal Skulls Revealed*,[21] contend that thirteen crystal skulls exist in a set and were once kept beneath the Potala Palace in Tibet. However, they were originally created in Atlantis and were used in the "Thirteen Healing Temples of Atlantis." It is believed by these researchers that many of the various crystal skulls currently known are from 10,000 to 30,000 years old. One date given for the Mitchell-Hedges

Skull is 17,000 years old.

According to these researchers, many crystal skulls have been used in human sacrifices, and therefore "perverted;" however, they think that others were spared this terrible fate. The general consensus of authors is that the various skulls are extraterrestrial in nature. Most of their material is channeled through trance mediums, and is therefore highly suspect. The authors believe through their channeling that "many of the Crystal Skulls were brought or projected here from other parts of our galaxy. …some of the Crystal Skulls we are currently familiar with were created on the Earth, but they were copied from the Thirteen Original Skulls, some of which may still be in Tibet."[21]

As we have previously mentioned, several crystal skulls are on display in museums throughout Mesoamerica. These tend to be smaller examples of the art form. The larger crystal skulls began appearing in the mid-1800s, and were generally attributed to the Aztecs. It should be noted here that at least two of the large crystal skulls, including the British Museum Skull that was once displayed as an Aztec artifact, have been proven to be fakes, carved at a much later date. But the origin of others is still very much in question. Their beauty and perfection feed the romantic notion that they may have been carved by some high-tech extraterrestrial or Atlantean civilization.

While many of the crystal skulls found in Central America are said to be "Aztec," we must remember that the Aztecs (also called *Mexica*) are a relatively recent civilization in Central America. It is thought that they arrived from the north some time around 1248. Nearly 300 years later, the Spanish arrived in 1519 and conquered the Aztecs by 1521.

While many of the Aztec royalty or priests may have possessed crystal skulls, these skulls may have come from earlier cultures, and have been hundreds, and even thousands, of years old. Quartz crystal is nearly indestructible, and crystal objects are likely to be handed down for many generations until they are lost or stolen. While a crystal skull might be smashed into thousands of tiny pieces with some effort, this would probably not have occurred very often, given that such an object would be valuable as well as difficult to make.

In fact, one of the big questions with the Aztecs and their crystal skulls is

whether the Aztecs had the rock-crystal carving technology and skill that would be required to carve and polish crystal skulls (large ones at least). This is one reason why crystal skulls are posited to have been made in Atlantis: it would take a high-tech civilization with advanced tools to make such objects. A similar argument would be used to suggest that extraterrestrials would have to have made the large crystal skulls: they just couldn't have been made by "primitive" ancient societies such as the Aztecs, Mayans, Mixtecs, Zapotecs or Olmecs.

An overview of these cultures is called for at this point. I have listed them above in descending order of their time of prevalence in Mesoamerica, the Aztecs being the most recent and the Olmecs being the most ancient. As with all anthropological designations, the delineation of their hegemony is somewhat arbitrary; the cultures would have overlapped, and sites initially used by one would likely have been taken over and used by others. Descendents of a conquered people would still retain some of their knowledge and arts in their new surroundings.

That having been said, farther south from the Aztec territory was the territory of the Mixtecs. It is questionable whether they were ever actually conquered by the Aztecs, but it is known that they traded with them. The Mixtecs are an older culture than the Aztecs, thought to be the descendents of the oldest Mesoamerican culture, the Olmecs. The skull motif was used by the Mixtecs, and it is possible that some of the "Aztec" skulls were actually traded to them by the Mixtecs. The Mixtec culture may go back to 500 BC or before.

Earlier than the Mixtecs were the Zapotecs, who also lived south of the Aztecs in the Oaxaca area, and were known to be excellent artisans and builders. Zapotec writing is thought to go back to 500 BC and was the basis for the earliest Mesoamerican writing. Zapotec writing is now thought to derive from the earliest Olmec and Epi-Olmec glyphs. Among the impressive Zapotec sites are Monte Alban—a mountain with the top cut off to facilitate the building of a megalithic city—and Mitla, also a megalithic site.

The online encyclopedia, *Wikipedia*, gives this curious origin of the Zapotecs: "The Zapotecs tell that their ancestors emerged from the earth,

from caves, or that they turned from trees or jaguars into people, while the elite that governed them believed that they descended from supernatural beings that lived among the clouds, and that upon death they would return to such status. In fact, the name by which Zapotecs are known today resulted from this belief."

The Zapotecs, like the Aztecs and Mayans, were thought to engage in human sacrifice, and the human skull motif is often associated with this. Whether crystal skulls somehow originated from human sacrifice and its gruesome symbology, is not known.

Zapotec and Mixtec artisans resided at the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan and were known for their jewelry and stonework. Many of the crystal skulls may have been fashioned by these craftsmen.

In the Yucatan, Guatemala, Chiapas and further south, the Mayans ruled for thousands of years, and still live in these areas today. The earliest Mayan communities are thought to have started on the Soconusco region of the Pacific Coast around 1800 BC, although, such communities were probably originally Olmec rather than Mayan.

The Mayan culture is thought to have flourished from 1000 BC to 200 AD, but little is known of this period. Classical Mayan civilization is typically dated from 250 AD to 900 AD, when a sudden collapse of the civilization occurred and hundreds of cities in the Peten jungles of northern Guatemala and the Yucatan area of Mexico were abandoned. Mayans continued to live in the mountains of the Guatemala and in remote areas along the Usamacinta River, as well as remote coastal areas in Belize, Quintana Roo and Honduras.

Although the Mayans were great builders, it is generally believed that they lacked wheel-based transportation (such as carts or wheelbarrows), pulleys, and even metal tools. Tools were of obsidian, jade, flint or basalt, all of which were used as hammers, celts (adzes), drills, scrapers and the like.

Nevertheless, the Mayans were able to build an extensive series of pyramids, plazas, cisterns and roads. The Maya used a form of cement that was a limestone-stucco that was plastered over limestone blocks and then often painted bright colors.

But, if the Mayans lacked metal tools and other basic forms of technology, would they have been able to carve and polish such a hard and difficult material as quartz crystal? What tools of what material might the Mayans have used? If they had crystal skulls, would they have made them themselves, or would they have come from some other civilization, such as

the older and more advanced Olmecs and Zapotecs?

This brings us to the Olmecs. In my book *The Mystery of the Olmecs*,[45] I maintain that the Olmecs were not only the oldest culture in Mesoamerica, they were also the most advanced. Essentially, civilization down-slid from the time of the Olmecs to the Aztec period just prior to the Spanish conquest.

Are the crystal skulls actually from the Olmec period, which is currently defined as approximately 1300 BC to 200 BC? The Olmecs not only quarried and carved 20-ton basalt boulders into finely made colossal heads (many of which display Negroid features, which is a subject of controversy in itself), but also had iron tools with which to do their excellent work.

In short, the Olmecs apparently had the technology to create life-size crystal skulls, while the later Mayans and Aztecs would seem to have been lacking the tools to make these objects. The Zapotecs and Mixtecs of Oaxaca and southern Mexico had inherited their skills from the Olmecs, and may have been the last of these lapidary specialists.

No one knows where the Olmecs came from, but the two predominant theories are:

1. They were Native Americans, derived from the same Siberian stock as most other Native Americans, and just happened to accentuate the Negroid genetic material that was latent in their genes.
2. They were outsiders who immigrated to the Olman area via boat, most likely as sailors or passengers on transoceanic voyages that went on for probably hundreds of years.

The Olmecs had many unusual similarities with the Maya and other faraway cultures, such as: the reverence for jade and exotic feathers; the use of hallucinogenic mushrooms and other psychedelic drugs; and the use of hieroglyphs on stone stelae as markers.

Says Richard Diehl in his book *The Olmecs: America's First Civilization* of the artifacts found at the Olmec burial at Tlatilco:

> One high-status woman was laid to rest with 15 pots, 20 clay figurines, 2 pieces of red-painted bright green jadite that may have formed part of a bracelet, a crystalline hematite plaque, a bone fragment with traces of alfresco paint, and miscellaneous stones. Another burial held the remains of a male whose skull had been deliberately modified in infancy and whose teeth were trimmed into geometric patterns as an adult. He may have been a shaman since all the objects placed with him were likely part of a shaman's power bundle. They included small *metates* for grinding hallucinogenic mushrooms, clay effigies of mushrooms, quartz, graphite, pitch, and other exotic materials that could have been used in curing rituals.[32]

Quartz crystals and psychedelic mushrooms were part of an ancient Olmec shaman's bag of tricks, and he was buried with them. Were some Olmec shamans buried with their crystal skulls? We have found so few Olmecs burials that we just do not know.

It would seem likely that crystal skulls and their use in magical rituals had already begun by this time. These skulls, nearly indestructible—except by shattering—cannot really be dated. Only the style of carving can help in the dating, or the discovery of a cache of these skulls whose origin and date can be clearly ascertained. Still, even if sites like this containing crystal skulls were found and dated, it would not mean that the crystal skulls had been made at the time of the burial—they could actually be hundreds of years older, having been passed down for generations.

My fascination with the Aztec, Mayan and Olmec civilizations has led me to travel all over the areas in which they lived and write several books such as *The Mystery of the Olmecs* and *Lost Cities of North and Central America*. My principal interest in these areas has been in the megalithic building engineering often found at these sites, as well as in ancient mining. The technology of carving quartz crystal can be seen as being as "high tech." The implication here is that any culture carving quartz crystal would have to have had metal tools, at the least, to work with.

The question remains, what cultures in Mesoamerica had the technology to carve quartz crystal? It is known that quartz was carved in ancient times, and

quartz crystal artifacts from ancient India are now on display at the British Museum, such as the “Crystal Goose” from the Gandara civilization (600 BC to 1100 AD). Such artifacts are also found in the Cairo Egyptian Antiquities Museum and the Anthropological Museum in Mexico City, where several small crystal skulls can be seen.

As I began researching the lost mines of the Olmecs in 2007, I came head-on into a little-known controversy surrounding Mexico and Mesoamerica: allegedly they did not know how to work metals until about the time of the Aztecs and their empire. Incredibly, sophisticated metalworking techniques were developed in South America as far back as 1200 BC, but such metalwork was not supposedly apparent in Mexico until thousands of years later. This would mean the technology for carving quartz crystal would be severely lacking.

Archeologist C. A. Burland said that Mexico in 1519 “was where Sumer and Egypt stood in 3500 BC.” In other words, mainstream archeologists say that the cultures of Central America were lagging by thousands of years the progress made by the civilizations in Asia, Europe and Africa. South American cultures such as Tiwanaku (Tiahuanaco) and the later Incas did have sophisticated mining and metalworking endeavors over a thousand years before those of Mexico, but still lacked, supposedly, knowledge of the wheel and writing.

Victor Von Hagen and other mainstream archeologists claim that none of the early Mexican cultures worked metal, and that this ability came up from South America only by slow stages through indirect trade. Says von Hagen in his 1958 work *The Aztec: Man and Tribe*,[27] “It does not appear at Teotihuacán, which was already a memory when the technique of gold and copper working reached Mexico. It was unknown to the early Mayas, and the Aztec craftsman contented himself with making diadems of jade. It was not practiced in Mexico much before the eleventh century.”

This assumption that metalworking was non-existent in Mexico until 400 years before the conquest seems rather curious. It seems likely that metalworking in Mexico, as in the old world and South America, would have been going on for thousands of years.

While in 1958 it was thought that metals were not found in Mexico until the 11th century, they are now thought to have occurred by the 7th century AD, still a relatively late date for metalworking to appear. One problem with most metal artifacts is that if they are left exposed to the elements they will

corrode and deteriorate. In the steamy jungle environment that covers much of the area in question, this would happen very quickly. So is it true that the Mayans and Olmecs did not know metals?

Mormon archeologists, seeking proof that the *Book of Mormon* gives an accurate account of Mesoamerican history—including early metalworking—have pointed out that language studies help confirm that metallurgy was indeed used in very ancient Mexico. Mayan and Olmec scholars who were reconstructing parts of several Mesoamerican languages were puzzled to find that a word for "metal" existed as early as 1000 BC, while the language of the Olmecs had a word for metal as early as 1500 BC. (John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon,* 1985, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City)

More importantly, metals that predate 600 AD have been found in Mesoamerica. A pottery vessel dating to around 300 AD (mentioned by Sorenson) might have been used for smelting. A metallic mass within this vessel contained copper and iron. The archeologist who made this find has also found a refined piece of iron in an ancient Mesoamerican tomb.

Much older are the tons of iron that the Olmecs apparently mined. In 1996, a non-Mormon archeologist named Dr. Anne Cyphers asserted that "a total of 10 tons of iron has been found at San Lorenzo, in several massive hoards, the largest of which was four tons. Before the discovery of these hoards, only a few pieces of iron were known. They were discovered by using metal detectors." (William J. Hamblin, "Talk on the Olmecs by Cypher," posted 9/26/96 SAMU-L)

Says Christopher Pool about Olmec metallurgy in his book *Olmec Archaeology and Early Mesoamerica* (Cambridge University Press, 2007):

> The Olmecs also participated to an unusual degree in the exchange of prestige goods. Literally tons of iron ore in the form of perforated iron cubes and polished mirrors were imported from Chiapas and Oaxaca to San Lorenzo (Agrinnier 1984; Coe and Diehl 1980a; Cyphers and DiCastro 1996; Pires-Ferreira 1976b), and iron ore mirrors later were interred with high-ranking individuals at La Venta (Drucker et al. 1959).

> Imported jade and serpentine from sources in the Guatemalan and perhaps Mexican highlands were deposited as offerings in Laguna Manatí before 1500 BC (Ortiz and Rodríguez 2000). The display of such exotic greenstones reached an extravagant level in Middle Formative La Venta, where thousands of tons of serpentine blocks were buried in massive offerings (Drucker et al. 1959).

Mining is a sophisticated activity and, like the quarrying, moving and carving of the colossal heads made by the Olmecs, is indicative of a highly developed culture, one similar to those found in ancient Egypt, India, Sumeria and China.

The origin and practice of metalworking in Mexico, as we see, is controversial. Like many things in archeology, the use of metals in Mexico is being continually pushed back in time, to a point where metallurgy in Mesoamerica is contemporary with metallurgy in South America. What concerns us here, though, is that the Aztecs did indeed have gold, silver, copper and other metals, as well as, presumably, mines. But some of the gold may have come from earlier civilizations such as the Olmecs, and Aztec mines may have originally been Olmec and Zapotec mines. The Aztecs also had jade, turquoise and quartz crystal objects such as quartz crystal rabbits, frogs and crystal skulls, which can be seen in museums today.

One example of greenstone sculpture that could be classified as a luxury item as described by Pool is the important Tuxtla Statuette, which was discovered in 1902 by a farmer plowing his field near La Mojarra in the west foothills of the Tuxtlas mountains in Veracruz state (in Mexico). The Tuxtlas mountains are also the site of the quarry for the famous Olmec colossal heads. Because of the script on the statue, it was sold through the black market and reputedly smuggled into New York hidden in a shipment of tobacco leaf. The Smithsonian Institution acquired it shortly thereafter for an undisclosed sum.

The Tuxtla Statuette is a small 6 inch rounded piece of nephrite (greenstone, similar to jade, though not quite as hard), carved to resemble a squat, bullet-shaped human with a duck bill and wings. It has 75 glyphs incised around it in the Epi-Olmec script. The Tuxtla Statuette one of only a

few extant examples of this writing system, and as such is invaluable.

The human head carved into the stone is bald, seems to have oriental eyes and large round earplugs. The most remarkable feature is that instead of a mouth, the statuette has the long bill that extends down to the chest. This bill has been identified as belonging to the boat-billed heron, a locally abundant bird along the Tabasco and southern Veracruz Gulf Coast. The wings or wing-like cape envelop the body while feet have been incised into the base. One might call this statue the “winged, duck-billed Olmec.” Olmecs are sometimes depicted as flying, and as such are typically known as “flying Olmecs.” This may have been in part because of their use of psychodelic mushrooms.

The Tuxtla Statuette is now held at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC as part of the greater Smithsonian collection. One wonders if the Epi-Omec script on the statuette is some sort of charm or magical incantation. Another curious item in the Smithsonian Dumbarton Oaks collection is the Izapa-style pectoral showing a seated figure with a hieroglyphic text. This Mayan pectoral may be engraved with “protective prayers” or other magical incantations. Was the Tuxtla Statuette a magical talisman carried by the owner for protection?

The Mayan and Epi-Olmec may have split early on, and certainly the Mayan writing system has been the most enduring of all the systems. By 200 BC there were at least three major writing systems, Zapotec, Epi-Olmec and Maya. By the Classic Period of Mesoamerica (300-900 AD) there were even more writing systems, most of them derived from Zapotec, such as Teotihuacano, Ñuiñe, Xochicalco, Mixtec, Mixteca-Puebla, and Aztec. All of these writing systems, including Epi-Olmec, are generally accepted that all Mesoamerican writing systems can be divided into two groups: Southeastern and Oaxacan. The southeastern group includes the Maya and Epi-Olmec scripts. The idea that there wasn’t a large amount of gold and other treasure available for the conquistadors was proved wrong in 1931 when the Mexican archeologist Dr. Alfonso Caso found the undisturbed tomb of a Mexican chieftain at Monte Albán, south of Mexico City, which contained superbly beautiful necklaces, earplugs, and rings. Historians realized that the simple, honest Bernal Diaz (who accompanied the first conquistadors and chronicled their finds in the New World) was making a magnificent understatement in his descriptions, and that Montezuma must have had, indeed, a vast store of various treasures.

So here begins the mystery of lost Aztec treasure—which may have included crystal skulls and other objects—the conquistadors had managed to acquire a fortune in gold and jewels from the Aztecs, but shortly afterward, no gold or jewels were to be found in the Aztec lands. So where did the Aztec treasures go? And what, exactly was included in that treasure? Could there have been crystal skulls?

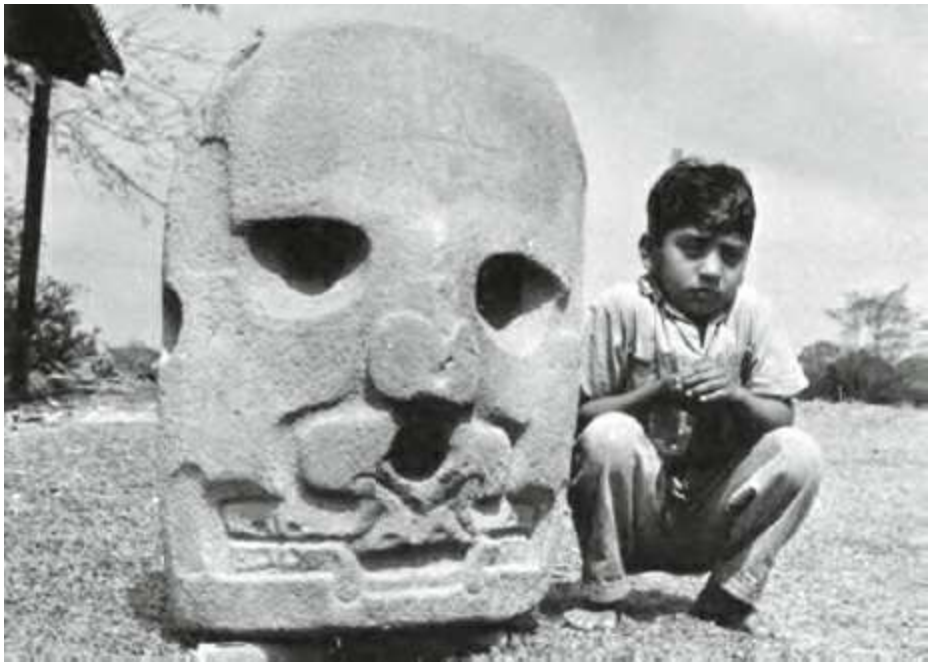
The enigma of ancient crystal skulls—who made them and how far back in time they go—is a puzzle that gets deeper the more we look into it. Aztec crystal skulls are likely to be older relics. Did the Mayans ever make crystal skulls? Could they have done it without metal tools?

Quartz crystal is so hard that it would be difficult to carve any kind of script on to it. No crystal skulls have been discovered, that I am aware of, that have any kind of writing on them, as we see on the Tuxtla Statuette.

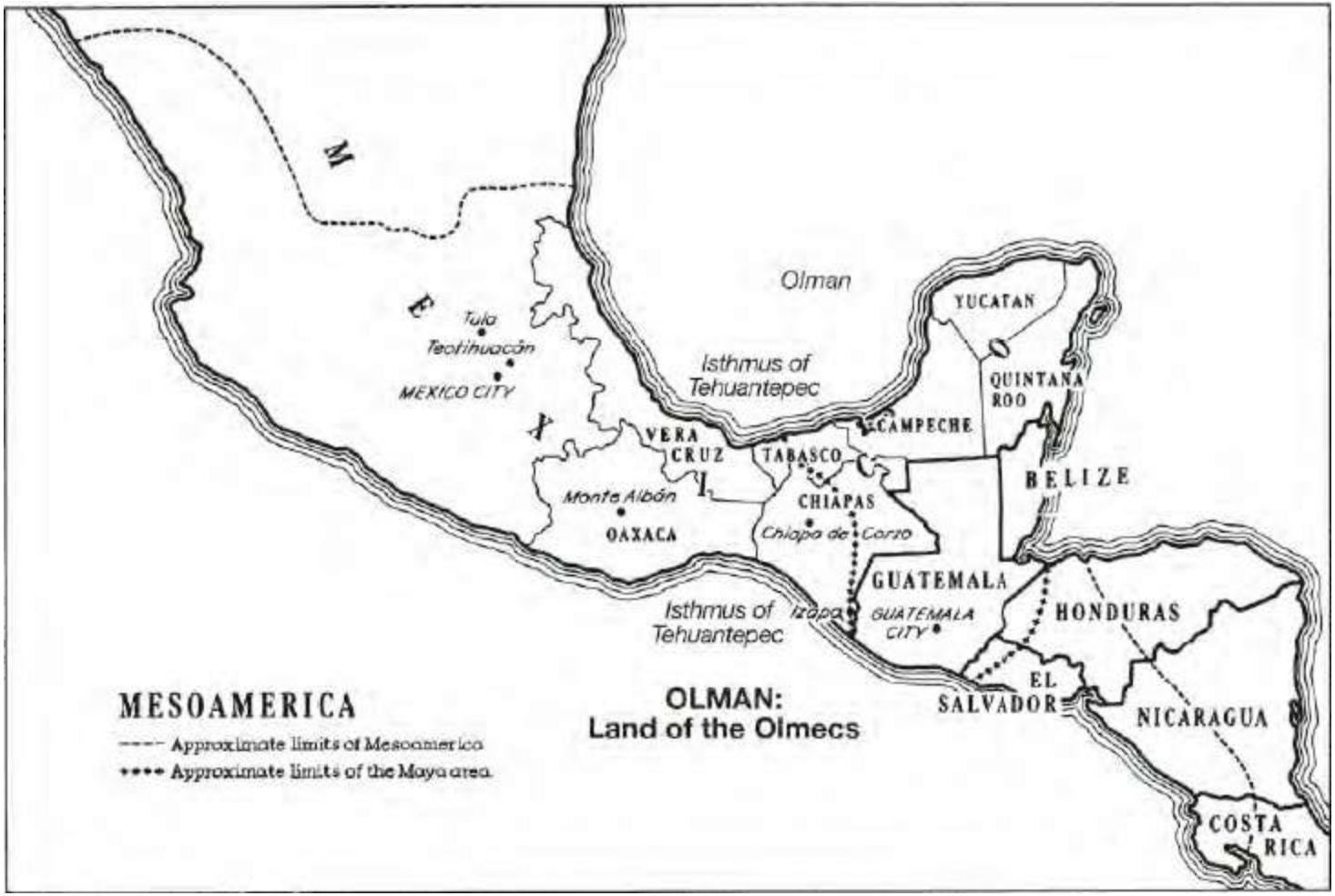
But it seems that the carving of crystals and the use of crystal skulls goes back to the Olmecs and was then transferred to the Zapotecs, who also inherited the Olmec language and script. Even in Aztec times, the art of making crystal skulls may have been jealously guarded by the Zapotecs.

Some questions to ask now would be: How common were crystal skulls in ancient Mexico? Were some of the crystal skulls actually life-size? Did the Aztec emperors have some sort of collection of crystal skulls at the time of the Conquest? If so, what would have happened to this collection? Now we have some understanding of the origin of crystal skulls (some at least) we can look into the fascinating claim that the ancient—and modern—emperors of Mexico had a secret collection of crystal skulls—skulls of magic and power.

The famous Aztec calendar stone from Mexico City, now thought to have been a pavement stone over which ritual combat matches were held.



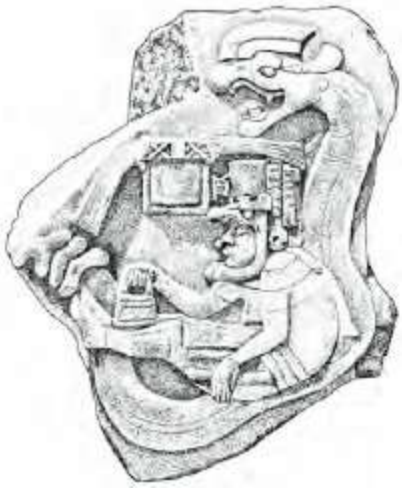
Stone skull mask from Medias Aguas, Mexico.


MEXICO
Olman
YUCATAN
Tula
Teotihuacán
MEXICO CITY
Isthmus of Tehuantepec
QUINTANA ROO
CAMPECHE
VERA CRUZ
TABASCO
BELIZE
Monte Albán
CHIAPAS
OAXACA
Chiapa de Corzo
GUATEMALA
Isthmus of Tehuantepec
Izapa
GUATEMALA CITY
HONDURAS
EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA
COSTA RICA
MESOAMERICA
---- Approximate limits of Mesoamerica
•••• Approximate limits of the Maya area
OLMAN:
Land of the Olmecs

Top: Aztec engraving of a skull with the hieroglyphs for “burning water” issuing from the mouth and the hieroglyphs “smoking mirror” at the top of the skull. Right: Drawing of a restored human skull with a carved design discovered at the Mayan city of Kaminaljuyu.

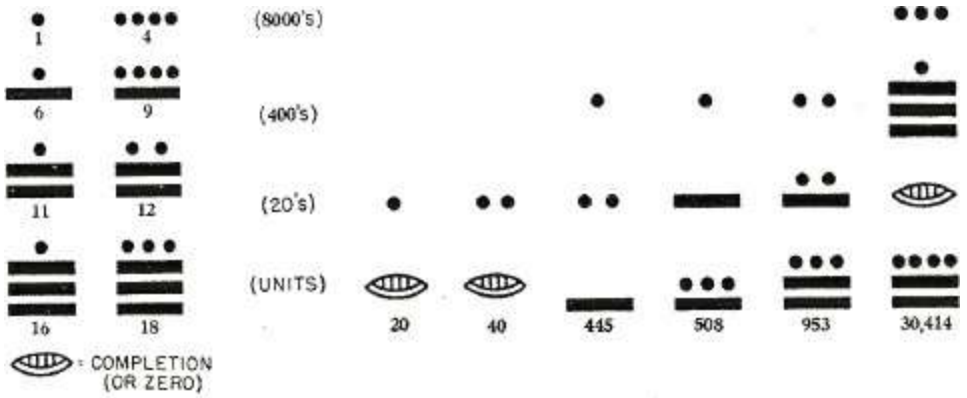
Monument 1 at Bilbao, Guatemala, depicting a man standing on a dismembered human torso. He is holding a knife and the four personages in the corners are holding human heads.

Monument 19 from La Venta. An Olmec, wearing ahelmet and holding a mysterious satchel in front of him while a feathered snake coils around him. What does he hold in his satchel—magical items such as crystals, oracle sticks and dried magic mushrooms?

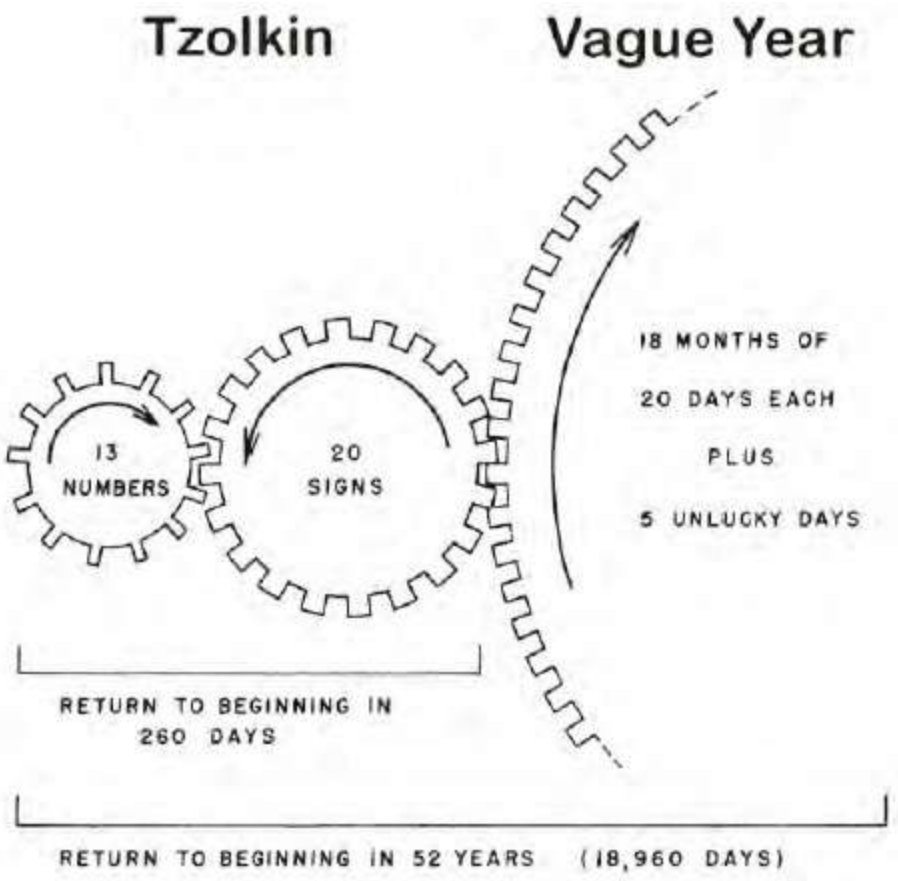


An elongated skull of Olmec-Mayan origin now in the Mexico City Museum.

The strange jade Olmec statuettes with their elongated heads found in La Venta, Mexico, with jade celts (adzes) next to them.

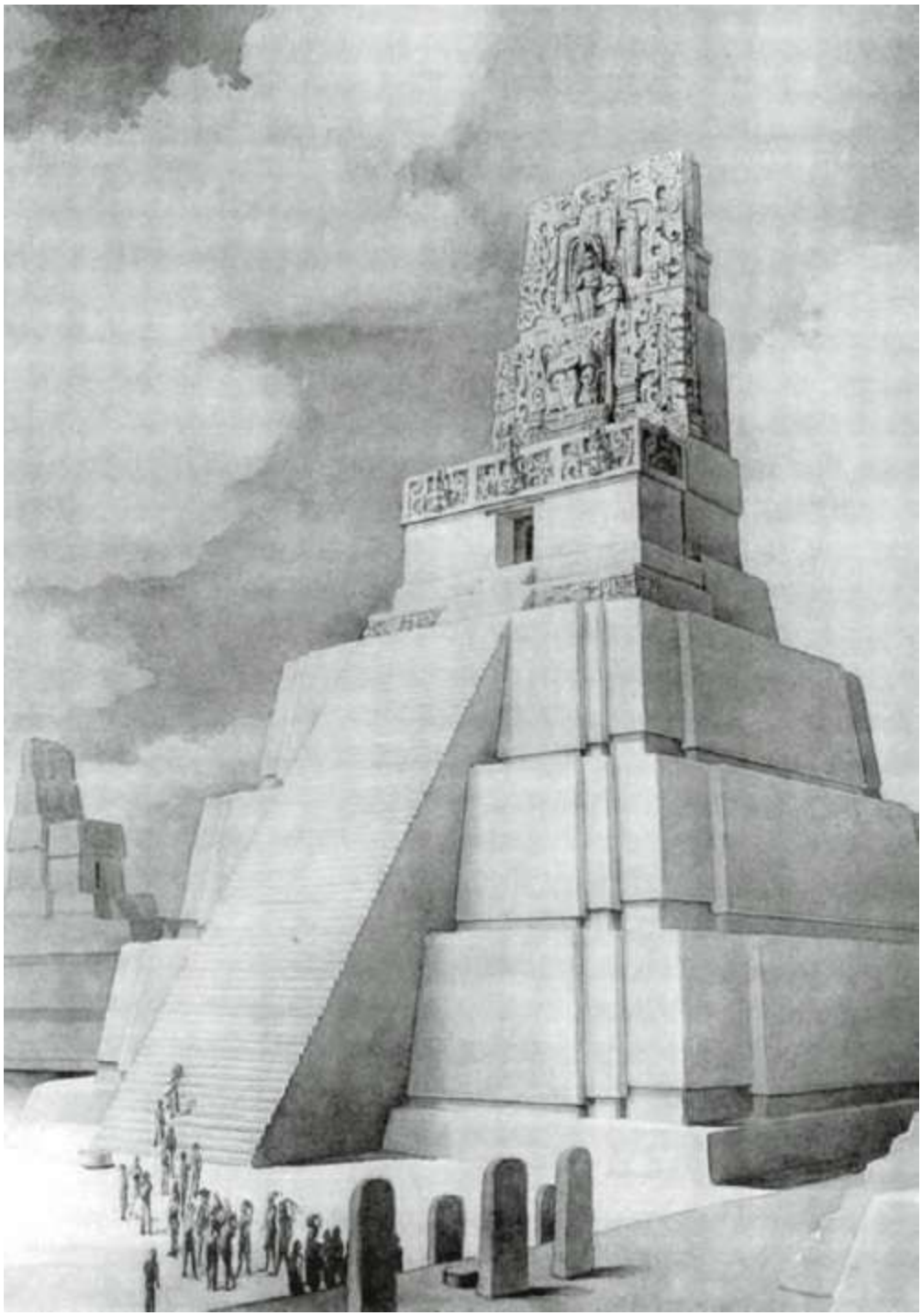


The Mayan numbering system came from the Olmecs, and was used as well by the Aztecs, Mixtecs and Zapotecs.

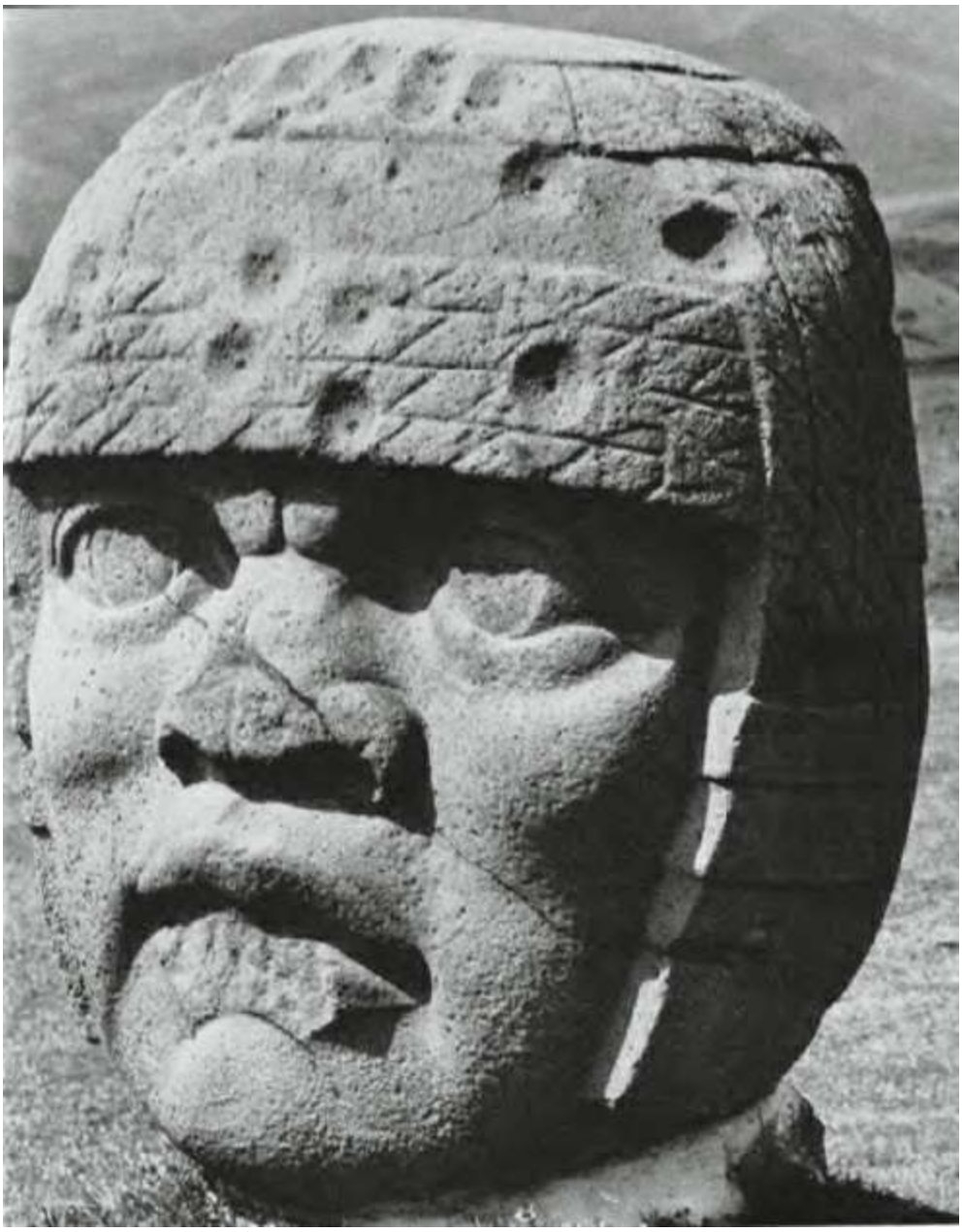


The Mayan calendar, called the Tzolkin, also originated with the Olmecs.

One of the giant Mayan stelae at Quirigua in Guatemala.



Phase One of the Mayan city of Tikal, deep in the central Yucatan. Why the Mayans built thousands of cities in this remote jungle area, and then abandoned them is still a mystery to historians today.



This Olmec colossal head from San Lorenzo, Vera Cruz State, Mexico has mysterious pock marks on the very hard basalt. It is as if some modern power tool drilled into the head, but this would have to have been in ancient times as the giant head was buried for several thousand years.

Top: A painting of the megalithic mountain top city of Monte Alban. Bottom: Stones carved with Olmec figures, apparently with different medical problems. Some of the slabs have early Epi-Olmec-Zapotec glyphs carved on them.

The Tuxtla jade statuette, now part of the Smithsonian Collection. Like jade heads and crystal skulls, this statuette is thought to have been some magical talisman. It has early Epi-Olmec-Zapotec glyphs carved on it.

Chapter 3

The Mexican Emperors' Magic Crystal Skull Collection

Poor Mexico, so far from God
and so close to the United States!
—Porfirio Diaz, President of Mexico, (1876-1911)

Did the various Mexican Presidents and Emperors have a secret treasure trove? California journalist and occultist Sibley S. Morrill suggested exactly that in his book, *Ambrose Bierce, F.A. Mitchell-Hedges and the Crystal Skull*.

Morrill maintained that the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull came from a special collection of crystal skulls, and other items, that had been handed down from Aztec times to various high Mexican officials, starting from the time of the Conquest.

Morrill, an Oakland, California, journalist and self-publisher, contributed to the Jack London Newsletter and wrote several books in the 1960s including *The Texas Cannibals or Why Father Serra Came to California* (1964) and *The Trouble with Shakespeare* (1974), in addition to *Ambrose Bierce, F.A. Mitchell-Hedges and the Crystal Skull* (1972).

Morrill was fascinated by turn-of-the-century San Francisco journalist Ambrose Bierce. After some years of study, and the resurgence of interest in the Mitchell-Hedges

Skull, he decided that the Mexican Revolutions of the late 1800s and early

1900s, in which Bierce and Mitchell-Hedges took part, had caused the dispersal of a number of ancient crystal skulls belonging to the Mexican Emperors.

What is interesting here is the notion, kept secret for centuries, that the intermarriage of Spaniards with Aztec and Zapotec aristocracy of early Mexico allowed the Mexican Emperors to obtain ancient treasure objects. That sacred objects like crystal skulls would be part of such a Presidential treasure trove is quite conceivable. Smaller crystal skulls were apparently fairly common in the Aztec world—but large ones? How common were they?

Say Morton and Thomas in *The Mystery of the Crystal Skulls*, "It was apparently widely rumored towards the end of the nineteenth century that the Mexican President, at that time Porfirio Diaz, owned a secret cache of treasure thought to include one or more crystal skulls. These treasures were said to have been handed down from one Emperor to the next and to have given the owner the powers necessary to rule."[22]

Says Morrill about the Mitchell-Hedges Skull in Chapter IV of *Ambrose Bierce, F.A. Mitchell-Hedges and the Crystal Skull*:

> There are, of course, several stories as to how the crystal skull was found. None of them, however, are of any consequence wholly aside from the fact that Mitchell-Hedges himself always refused to reveal the answer. Some stories are that he found it in a Mayan temple on an island off the coast of Honduras. Others have it the temple was on the Honduran mainland or in Mexico or British Honduras. And there are yet others that sound as if they originated in the mind of Edgar Rice Burroughs and have about as much fact to support them as the story of Tarzan of the Apes. [Morrill is apparently referring to Mitchell-Hedges' book *The White Tiger*, which we will discuss in the next chapter.]
>
> …However, there are certain important facts about the explorer's life which, when related to what is known of the lives of others and the facts of the times in which they lived, have considerable bearing on the subject.

In this connection, it is important to know that some high officials of the Mexican Government are of the unofficial opinion that the skull was acquired by Mitchell-Hedges in Mexico, and that it, like countless thousands of other artifacts—including an untold number in the 1960s—was illegally removed from the country.

There is justification for their belief, quite aside from the indisputable point that the skull may have got into Aztec hands through the dissolution of the New Mayan Empire and the presence of Aztec and other Mexican forces in the Yucatan at that time.

Though that justification concerns some seemingly fantastic things, there is evidence to support it. The evidence involves one of the most unlikely combinations of people imaginable. They are: J.W. "Bet-a-Million" Gates, James "Silver Fox" Keene, Jules Bache, and J. Pierpont Morgan among the Wall Street barons; Lord Duveen of Millbank, whose position in the art world must be described as unique; General Pancho Villa, the Mexican revolutionary; Major Ambrose Bierce, the famous writer, and various others, one of whom was Lieb Bronstein, later known as Leon Trotzky.

How Gates, Keene, Bache and Morgan got into the story was that when Mitchell-Hedges first came to the United States in 1900, he had the right introduction and the ability to capitalize upon it. The ability lay in a certain savoir faire, plus a marked flair for poker. The details are given in his autobiography *Danger My Ally*, and they make sense as well as interesting reading. Suffice it to say, for this purpose, that on the first occasion he met members of the group, he vividly impressed them by winning $26,000 of their money.

So, apparently Mexican officials actually believe that some collection of crystal skulls once existed—and they were dispersed during the long dictatorial reign of the Mexican President Porfirio Diaz who ruled Mexico as President from 1876 to 1911 (forced briefly to step down between 1880 and 1884).

Other crystal skulls, besides the Mitchell-Hedges skull, have been said to come from this theoretical collection of crystal skulls, including a skull called "Ami." The Internet site found at biblitecapleyades.net says of this skull, made of amethyst: "Its history is unsure, purportedly it was part of a collection of crystal skulls held by the Mexican President Diaz from 1876-

1910, but also we have reports the skull was discovered in the Oaxaca area [of Mexico] and was handed down generation to generation through an order of Mayan Priests. Now it resides in San Jose, California with a group of businessmen who are offering this skull for sale."

Similarly, the crystal skull kept at the Smithsonian was said to have come from the Porfirio Diaz collection. It was given to the Smithsonian anonymously with a note that stated:

> Dear Sir, This Aztec Crystal Skull was purported to be part of the Porfirio Diaz collection, was purchased in Mexico City in 1960… I am offering it to the Smithsonian without any consideration. Naturally, I wish to remain anonymous…[22]

This skull is sometimes said to be the largest and ugliest of all the crystal skulls. It weighs thirty-two pounds. It is made of cloudy quartz crystal and has a smooth finish but its features seem crudely executed.

When the Smithsonian National Museum of American History tried to track down the donor, they discovered he was dead. In fact, after he sent the skull to the museum, his lawyer said, his client committed suicide. After his client bought the skull, his wife died, and his son had a terrible accident that left him brain dead. The man then went bankrupt.

Early on, some of the staff believed that the skull was a cursed relic. Then some tests were done in London on this skull and two crystal skulls owned by the British Museum. The tests were observed by the Smithsonian's Jane Walsh; they determined that all three skulls had been made using modern tools. Said Walsh, "We discovered that all the crystal skulls had been carved with modern coated lapidary wheels using industrial diamonds and polished with modern machinery."

But can a crystal skull be bought in Mexico and be a modern forgery? Yes, certainly. Could a crystal skull that was part of Porfirio Diaz's supposed collection also be a modern fake? That is also possible. Let us examine, briefly, who Porfirio Diaz was.

Diaz was part Mixtec, which probably made him appreciate crystal skulls and other ancient motifs as much as any Mexican Emperor or President. Diaz

was born on September 15, 1830 in the city of Oaxaca. His father was a modest innkeeper in the city, but died when Porfirio was only three years old. His mother tried to keep the inn going but it failed. She sent the young boy to the seminary to become a priest. However, he rebelled against the authority of the Catholic Church and joined the military.

Successful in the military, Diaz entered the *Instituto de Ciencias y Artes* to study law. He gained prominence by supporting Benito Juarez and the liberals in the War of the Reform and in the war against Emperor Maximilian and the French during the pivotal years 1861 through 1867.

The British Museum skull was said to come to light just before the French occupation which began in 1862 and lasted to 1864, and was ultimately acquired for the British Museum from Tiffany's by Sir John Evans of Minoan fame in 1897.

Diaz dreamed of defending his country from the United States and wanted to be President of Mexico. He was defeated by Benito Juarez in the elections of 1867 and 1871, and after each defeat he led an unsuccessful uprising, saying that he was fighting the powerful influence of foreign investors in Mexico.

Diaz again lost the presidential race of 1876 and led another uprising against the government. This time he was successful and overthrew the President, Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada. He was installed as president in 1877 and essentially ruled Mexico until 1911 when he fled to France. Diaz died in 1915 and is buried in the *Cimetiere du Montparnasse* in Paris. It is interesting to wonder if one of his magical crystal skulls might be buried with him.

In the turbulent times of the late 1800s Diaz was forced to divide up his considerable treasure trove—which apparently included a number of crystal skulls. In Diaz's home state of Oaxaca several unusual crystal items had been found at Monte Alban and one of them, a crystal goblet from Tomb No. 7, was being tested by the Smithsonian in the mid-1990s.[22]

Oaxaca was clearly an area where authentically ancient crystal objects could be found. Had Porfirio Diaz personally acquired some of his crystal skulls from Monte Alban or other areas of Oaxaca? Were others to come from more ancient collections, kept by the various Emperors of Mexico?

There is a popular legend, related in greater detail in the previous chapter,

that there are supposed to be thirteen life-size skulls which, when brought together, would create some sort of power matrix. In light of how legends travel, one wonders if this one may have started with the possibility that Porfirio Diaz had thirteen crystal skulls as part of his collection.

Sibley Morrill basically says that the large crystal skulls such as the Mitchell-Hedges and Paris and London skulls were from the Porfirio Diaz collection, which included even more crystal skulls than these three. Powerful art dealers like Lord Duveen of Millbank and wealthy collectors of art like J.P. Morgan and his poker buddies, were all part of the equation for buying—and then selling—rare and collectable Aztec, Mayan and other Mesoamerican art, presumably including crystal skulls.

Lord Duveen of Millbank has been called the most influential art dealer who ever lived, having stocked the museums of Europe and America with his carefully chosen artifacts. Lord Duveen of Millbank's acquisitions apparently would include some crystal skulls. An associate of Lord Duveen's was Eugène Boban, a French art dealer who specialized in Mexican art, and was known to have handled a number of crystal skulls.

Fig.1-Eugene Boban, a French art dealer, in 1867.

Boban (Fig. 1) worked out of Mexico City between 1860 and 1880 and was a very prolific art dealer. Although his character is somewhat questionable, he is known to have warned collectors against fake pre-Columbian artifacts. Both the British Museum Crystal Skull and the Paris Crystal Skull passed through his hands as did as scores of others. They were sold as being Aztec in origin.

Curiously, investigation by the Smithsonian indicated that the London skull from Boban had quite likely been made in Idar-Oberstein, Germany, in the mid-1800s; other sources claimed it was made in Austria about that same time. Testing by the British Museum in 1996 bore out that the skull was modern-carved, and these findings were officially corroborated by the British Museum in 2005. French archeologists still maintain that the Paris crystal skull is authentically Aztec, however.

Was Boban purposely dealing with modern fakes of ancient crystal skulls? Were some of his crystal skulls authentic pre-Columbian artifacts from Mexico? Was the demand for crystal skulls so great that he had to have them made to later sell to museums? Is it possible that the German crystal skulls were taken to Mexico where they were then acquired by Boban and brought back to Europe (this time to Paris) and then sold as authentic Aztec crystal skulls?

One has to wonder if some of the German crystal skulls were part of Porfirio Diaz's alleged collection of crystal skulls. Is it even possible that Diaz had the skulls made himself. He, curiously, ended up in Paris, just as Eugène Boban did. Boban died in Paris in 1908.

It is Morrill's theory that the Mitchell-Hedges Skull was kept in Mexico as part of the treasure acquired by Pancho Villa and other revolutionaries who fought against Diaz in the last years of his presidency. This final treasure was divided up and used as payment to various generals and governors—to the victors went the spoils. Morrill thinks that Mitchell-Hedges and Ambrose Bierce purchased the skull and later took it to British Honduras (Belize) and put it in a bank vault there.

He thinks that they then went to England in 1914, and then returned to Belize. Mitchell-Hedges then took possession of the crystal skull and Bierce went on about his business.

This secret treasure trove of crystal skulls and other objects, of which there is no official record, is presumed to be the source of most of the authentic crystal skulls now in museums and private collections around the world.

Morrill's book is unique in that it is actually the culmination of his study of Ambrose Bierce, a journalist that he clearly admired. Who was Ambrose Bierce anyway? How did he get mixed up with crystal skulls?

Born in Ohio in 1842, Ambrose G. Bierce served as a United States Army officer for the Union during the Civil War. As a journalist and author after the war, he decided to live in San Francisco. He became famous for his

collection of Civil War stories including the still-famous “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.” Later he wrote *The Devil’s Dictionary*, a book of satire and humorous definitions. Bierce was considered one of the premier writers of his day, and was sometimes likened to Mark Twain. Bierce, by his own admission, was fascinated by the occult.

Bierce was the subject of the movie *Old Gringo*, produced by the Fonda Films Company with Gregory Peck in the role of Bierce. Bierce continues to fascinate people today, and is a fixture in San Francisco mythology, all because he suddenly vanished in northern Mexico with Pancho Villa and, Morrill contents, Mike Mitchell-Hedges.

Bierce lived in San Francisco for over thirty years working as a highly paid reporter and columnist for the Hearst newspaper syndicate. Bierce supposedly disliked Hearst, but agreed with some of his policies, and was essentially Hearst’s journalist-agent in Washington DC and New York, writing stories favorable to Hearst’s point of view.

Suddenly, in 1913 Bierce announced from Washington DC that he was going to Mexico, a country in the throes of revolution, to travel diagonally across the northern part, and then go to Panama. He toured his old Civil War battlefields and then went to Laredo and El Paso, Texas, and ultimately on to Mexico. Bizarrely, Bierce joined the army of Pancho Villa as an observer in Ciudad Juarez and then began to “ride with Villa.”

Also “riding with Villa” at that time was Mike Mitchell-Hedges who writes about it in his last book, a full biography of his life entitled *Danger My Ally*.[1] Mitchell-Hedges says he participated in raids with Villa but was essentially his “prisoner.” Curiously, Morrill points out, Mitchell-Hedges never mentions Ambrose Bierce in his claim to be “riding with Villa,” which would seem unusual. Ambrose Bierce is still a famous person to this day, and was definitely riding with Villa at the same time, but then suddenly disappeared.

Bierce’s disappearance is considered one of the great missing persons mysteries of the 20th century. He simply vanished in late 1913, and even if he had been shot by Villa or someone else, his death would have been noticed

by “observers” who were riding with Villa—such as Mike Mitchell-Hedges.

A number of theories have been forwarded as to the fate of Bierce: that he was slain during the battle of Ojinaga; that he was shot by a firing squad of *Huerista* soldiers in the old mining village of Zacatecas, or in another mountain town called Sierra Mohada; or that Bierce got back to the United States and died in Texas—or maybe even shot himself in the Grand Canyon, as he was an old man finally ready to die!

All of these theories have been put forth in the many books written about Bierce, but Morrill’s is unique among them.

It was known that Bierce was carrying at least $2,000 in gold coins when he went into Mexico. This was a considerable sum at the time, and gold coin is what would have been needed to buy one’s way across Mexico during those turbulent revolutionary days. Bierce and Mitchell-Hedges, and everyone else, would have been armed to the teeth. One can imagine that they carried double pistols, a rifle and extra ammunition, as it would not be easily available in Mexico. In short, guys like Ambrose Bierce and Mike Mitchell-Hedges were the real-life Wild Bunch of turn-of-the-century tourists: they were out for a good time and adventure, poker playing, wild women, and Revolution— Mexican style! One had better come with some weapons and ammunition to that party—and they did!

It is a fascinating idea that the various Emperors, Presidents, and governors of Mexico may have used crystal skulls as oracles and implements of power. In a nation steeped in the occult, witchcraft and skull worship, the Presidents of Mexico, especially the dictator Porfirio Diaz, may have included crystal skulls as part of their arsenal of domination. These magical skulls were said to wield the power of death, and woe to those against whom they were used.

Such stories may have been told by Pancho Villa to Mike Mitchell-Hedges as they rode together, thereby creating his “Skull of Doom” story which he told on British radio over and over again in the later 1940s and early 1950s. Some think that Mitchell-Hedges got his “Skull of Doom” concept from an East African witchdoctor whom Mitchell-Hedges mentions briefly in *Danger My Ally*.[1]

It is a great scene to imagine, perhaps one that will be turned into a film by some enterprising filmmaker yet to come: Bierce and Mitchell-Hedges,

Pancho Villa and some of his friends, a few other foreigners as well, playing poker at a big table with gold coins, silver objects and crystal skulls all around them, possibly being used to ante up. With their guns on the table as well… uh, probably not on the table.

It was a rough and tough life, and sometimes everyone's pointing his gun—except you. It was not unusual to come under suspicion and be suddenly executed as a spy. In Bierce's case, perhaps some desperados wanted to get their hands on his $2000, a fortune in Mexico at the time. Bierce was reportedly ready to die, and would probably go out fighting, as he was never without a pistol. As briefly noted above, one biographer even claims he fought his way north through the battle of Ojinaga, got to Texas, and then went to the Grand Canyon and shot himself. How strange is that?

Every biography of Bierce includes the very controversial incident of Bierce having shot a *Huerista* in 1913 to show Pancho Villa that he was loyal. In one of his last letters sent to friends and relatives, Bierce admitted to shooting the captive, firing-squad style, in front of Villa. Naturally, his family and friends were shocked that Bierce would execute someone he did not know like that.

Ambrose Bierce disappeared after that, and supposedly, was never heard from again. According to Bierce's biographers, however, he allegedly sent several letters to his daughter in Illinois saying that he was in England with Lord Kitchener; a story to that effect appeared in the March 9, 1915 edition of the *Oakland Tribune*.

Could it be that Ambrose Bierce and Mike Mitchell-Hedges rode with Villa for awhile, ended up buying the famous Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull for $1,000 in gold (or something like that)—or possibly even winning it in a card game—and then rode off into the interior of Mexico on their way to British Honduras? This may have been the case.

Morrill believes that both Bierce and Mitchell-Hedges were spies for the American and British governments, sent to Mexico to see what was happening during those years. During that time, he says, Britain was switching its fleet over from coal to oil, and nearly all the oil for the British fleet came from Mexico. Protecting British oil interests in Mexico was of utmost importance, and it seemed quite obvious to Morrill that Mitchell-Hedges was on a British spying mission.

If Bierce disappeared and was never heard from again (except for the mysterious letters sent from Britain that were "destroyed" by his daughter)

we can at least be satisfied that Mitchell-Hedges did not disappear, but later showed up in various places such as England, New York and British Honduras.

Mike Mitchell-Hedges was oddly silent about Bierce, though Morrill, who visited Dorland and Anna ("Sammy") Mitchell-Hedges in the San Francisco area in the late 1960s and says that, "Anna Mitchell-Hedges recalls hearing her father say that he believed Bierce died in Panama."

Morrill does not think that Bierce made it to Panama. He believes that Bierce ended up in British Honduras, and went to investigate the so-called Yalbac Triangle to investigate the strange disappearances reported there.

One of Mike Mitchell-Hedges friends was Dr. Thomas Gann, a medical officer and official of the British government for British Honduras. Gann worked on several archeological projects in British Honduras, including excavations at Lubaantun.

In his 1925 book *Mystery Cities*,[3] Gann writes about his own experiences in Central America, including a trip to the area where the bizarre disappearances occurred. This area is near the villages of Chorro and Yalbac, which are "some of the remoter Indian settlements in the bush where a white man was seldom or never seen." His reason for wanting to visit such places was that "The Indians, especially in the Spanish-American republics, take every possible precaution to hide their villages, concealing them in the depths of the bush, where they are impossible to find," and he wanted to see what they were like. He attributes the concealment to a "survival ... of terror, a heritage from Spanish colonial days," and finds that though "the Indians of British Honduras have received nothing but encouragement and kind treatment at the hands of the local Government, old instincts die hard."

Gann went to check these villages out and did not find it too difficult to meet the Indians of Chorro, nor those of Yalbac about twelve miles farther on. His walk through the jungle went without incident, despite having to pass

through a section of bush with “a somewhat sinister reputation.” The triangular section, bounded on one side by a river and on the other two “by fairly well-beaten trails” was of such nature that “anyone finding their way into it would not have the slightest difficulty in getting out; and yet within a few years no less than three persons have unaccountably and mysteriously disappeared here, and never been heard of again.”

Dr. Gann, who gave no theories on the disappearances, described them as follows in Morrill’s abbreviated version:

> The first was that of a Bernardino Coh, 17, who set out one morning on a visit to Yalbac with the intention of shooting some game on the way. He had breakfast with a friend in the village of San Pedro, through which he had to pass and when he left, that was the last seen of him. Three days later, his family and friends, alarmed over his disappearance, started to search for him. Along the trail from San Pedro to Yalbac, “a quick eye of one of the Indians discovered a place where someone had recently forced a passage from the trail into the bush.” Following this up for about a mile, they found the boy’s shot-bag lying on the ground, still containing his caps, powder-horn, matches and a pack of corn husk cigarettes. Beyond this the trail was easily followed, as the boy seemed to have lurched drunkenly forward from side to side, trampling down the low brush and breaking many small branches. Suddenly it debouched into a little open glade such as one often finds in the forest… The trail, till it entered the glade, was plain and unmistakable, but there was no trace of anyone having walked through the sour grass, where a perfectly unmistakable track is always left… there was no indication of anyone having left the little glade, no mark of a struggle, and—no sign of the boy.
>
> The next disappearance was that of a Sergeant Bascombe of the Constabulary at Cayo, “a man of Herculean proportions, and a match for three ordinary men.” Bascombe went to Yalbac with an interpreter to arrest a criminal. The criminal got wind of it and left before Bascombe arrived.
>
> The next day, the interpreter returned from Yalbac early in the morning, but Bascombe decided to postpone his return until nearly noon on the chance that his quarry might appear. At noon, Bascombe left Yalbac, well in time to arrive at Cayo before dark.

When Bascombe failed to show up by the following night, the constabulary started searching for him, aided in the search by a large group of Indians. Less than a mile along the road out of Yalbac “a broad trail was found where someone riding mule-back had left the path and forced a passage through the bush. This track was easily followed, and a few hundred yards down it Bascombe’s mule was found picketed and quietly grazing on the underbrush.” Bascombe’s trail was then followed from the point where he had dismounted, and “his machete and leather belt were seen lying on the ground. A little farther on, his revolver in its leather case, was picked up, and lastly the broad felt uniform hat which he had been wearing when last seen. The trail extended a little farther, then, as in the case of Bernardino, it ended in a small open glade, which showed no signs of a struggle, or of that missing man, and out of which no other trail could be traced into the bush. Large rewards were offered,” and the surrounding country was literally combed by scores of men, but nothing further was ever found.

The third case involved a Civil Commissioner Rhys who accompanied a troop into the area on a hunt for a band of Icaiche Indians that had been raiding mahogany camps from across the border. The troop was attacked by the Icaiche while it was “halted in a broad pass cut through the bush for trucking out mahogany to the river.” The Icaiche put the troop to rout, killing five and wounding 16. But “curiously enough, the Indians took no advantage of the opportunity thus offered them, for instead of following up their defeated adversaries, whom they might practically have wiped out, they calmly took themselves off into the bush in the opposite direction.”

As for Commissioner Rhys, he was never seen again. The dead and wounded were easily found after the troop reformed and returned to the scene. But they were unable to learn anything to show the fate of the Commissioner other than the fact there was nothing to indicate he had been taken captive by the Icaiche.

Though Dr. Gann found nothing at Yalbac when he arrived there that falls in the same category of the mysterious, he came across something that might have done so had his mind been more open to certain possibilities. On the afternoon of his arrival, he was informed by an Indian of a cave the latter had found that contained some old pottery vessels. On the following day—and against the wishes of the chief, the

jefe of the community—the physician set off before dawn to investigate it. After traversing six miles of heavy bush, he and the Indian encountered “bare, rugged limestone cliffs, some fifty to a hundred feet high.” In the face of one of them they saw an opening about 20 feet above ground. They climbed up and entered it.

“The floor of the cave was at first quite flat, and covered with a hard calcareous deposit which had dripped from the roof… Whilst chipping idly in the deposit on the floor with my machete, I brought to light three small polished beads of green jade.” Near a large boulder, they found two bundles of pitch-pine sticks. Gann decided they had been left there centuries before, but since they were as good as ever, he lighted one and proceeded to explore.

“For a considerable distance the passage was straight and flat, but suddenly the floor took a dip downwards, and we found our way blocked by a small lagoon of perfectly clear water. Skirting around the margin of this on an elevated ridge, we came to a rocky wall four or five feet high, beyond which we entered another passage.” In that they found plenty of pottery, and it led them into a “great rocky chamber, the exact size and shape of which we were not able to make out, as the light of the torch was not sufficient.”

There were other passages leading into that cavern, and before the last torch went out, Gann noted that “the top of one of the stalagmites in the great chamber had been rudely carved to represent a human head, and that in front of it was placed a more or less cubical block of stone which may have served as an altar.”

Shortly after Gann left the cave, an Indian met him with news that he was needed immediately in Yalbac where a severe accident had occurred. “How he had followed us across six miles of open bush and stony ground, where to my inexperienced eyes we had not left a trace, was to me inexplicable, yet he had done it, and moreover, done it quickly.”

Gann eventually returned, of course, for another look at the cave, but he gave no indication of exploring the passages that led away from the great chamber. Nor did he say whether he ever got to another cave whose mouth he had seen in the distance on the limestone cliff face during his first visit, the indication being that the natives were not cooperative.

All of which suggests that the natives had had him under close surveillance, and, finally deciding that his chief interests really were at Lubaantun, felt it better to let him do his harmless looking and then go away. In short, they took pains to see to it that he did not come upon anything on the order of what Coh and Bascombe had seen, and so there was no reason to have him disappear from civilization.

For the only sensible explanation as to why it was that Bernardino Coh, Sergeant Bascombe and Commissioner Rhys disappeared is that they saw something they were not supposed to have seen.

The something Coh and Bascombe saw was of such a nature that it compelled them to leave the trail to investigate, and quite possibly the same was true of Rhys. As to what it was they saw, there is simply no knowing at this point.

However, it seems likely that whatever it was that drew the missing men off the trail and through the brush to a glade from which they vanished, it was in some way linked to the hundred thousand skulls that so impressed Bernal Diaz del Castillo that day in Zocotlan, to the crystal skull itself, and hence to Bierce on the basis of our hypothesis.

What Morrill is referring to at the end of his quote is the story told by Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who accompanied the Conquistador Cortez during the conquest and wrote about it in his book *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*(various translations, such as the 1956 edition by Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, translated by Irving A. Leonard). In chapter 2, “The March Inland” Diaz del Castillo describes seeing piles of skulls stacked up at Zocotlan (or Xocoltlan): “I remember that in the plaza where some of their oratories stood, there were piles of human skulls so regularly arranged that one could count them, and I estimated them at more than a hundred thousand. I repeat again that there were more than one hundred thousand of them.”

Morrill finally comes to the bizarre conclusion that some sort of flying witch, bruja, chupacabras or “skinwalker” was somehow responsible for the disappearances in Belize, including Bierce’s. Morrill had already written a book of the life of Father Junipero Serra, a Mexican Roman Catholic priest who was an early mission pioneer in California.

According to Morrill, Father Serra was part of the Inquisition in Mexico City and wrote of a witchcraft case on September 1, 1752:

> I am in possession of several grave indications that in the district of this mission of mine and its neighborhood there are several persons of the class known as “gente de razon,” that is to say they are not Indians, who are addicted to the most detestable and horrible crimes of sorcery, witchcraft and devil worship and who are in league with them [the devils] and others, the inquiry into which appertains to your Venerable Tribunal of the Inquisition. And if it is necessary to specify one of the persons guilty of such crimes, I accuse by name a certain Melchora de los Reyes Acesta, an inhabitant of said mission, against whom we, the ministers, have accusations... In this regard, in these last few days, a certain Cayetana, a very clever Mexican woman... has confessed—she being observed and accused of similar crimes, having been held under arrest by us for some days past—that in the mission there is a large congregation of the said “personas de razon,” who therefore are not Indians, although some Indians also join them, and that these persons, not Indians, flying through the air by night are in the habit of meeting in a cave on a hill near a ranch called El Saucillo, in the center of the said missions, where they worship and make sacrifice to the demons who appear visibly there in the guise of young goats and various other things of that nature.

Morrill, knowing that Bierce had a strong interest in weird things and the occult, such as flying witches and odd vanishings, then says:

> Why we have cited this report by Father Serra is largely because of the references to “flying through the air” by persons who used caves, were sorcerers, some of whom were Indian but more of whom were “gente de razon,” though not Spaniards, since probably they would have been so labeled. While it is quite possible the “personas de razon” were mixed bloods, it is equally possible that they were members of another people, remnants of the “bearded whites,” references to whom were made by the Spaniards from Peru to California, and about whom Bierce knew through his extensive reading, including H. H. Bancroft’s histories, as well as through his acquaintance with some of the men who

wrote them.

What the significance of the foregoing is to our hypothesis about Bierce, Mitchell-Hedges and the crystal skull in British Honduras goes as follows:

Whether Bierce went to England in 1914 and returned months later, or whether he merely gave the letter to Mitchell-Hedges to mail from England and remained in British Honduras, he decided to do some investigating of either the Yalbac triangle or some other of many equally mysterious places in the general area. And, because of his asthma, it was probably a place in which there would be hills and hence caves and cliffs.

That possibility is not at all fantastic. Any reader of Bierce's works will instantly recognize the attraction the crystal skull and its origin would have had for him. Death's heads, so to speak, studded his psyche. The macabre had a tremendous pull for him. The possibility of there being unknown forces in the hands of remnants of older civilizations—and maybe white, at that—would seize his interest. Since he knew that the history of Mexico and Central America contained plenty of suggestions of the sort of thing described in the official findings of Father Serra and other inquisitors, he would have, through the stimulus of the skull, the country and his knowledge, precisely the kind of subject that would be most fitting to him at that time in his life.

Indeed, not only his going to Mexico as an intelligence agent, but his involvement with the crystal skull would be completely in keeping with a sage and beautiful comment by McWilliams on Bierce in his late fifties, "his idealistic-romantic spirit continued to make overtures towards that 'strangeness' of experience which finally lured him after its phosphorescent gleamings along the Mexican ranges."

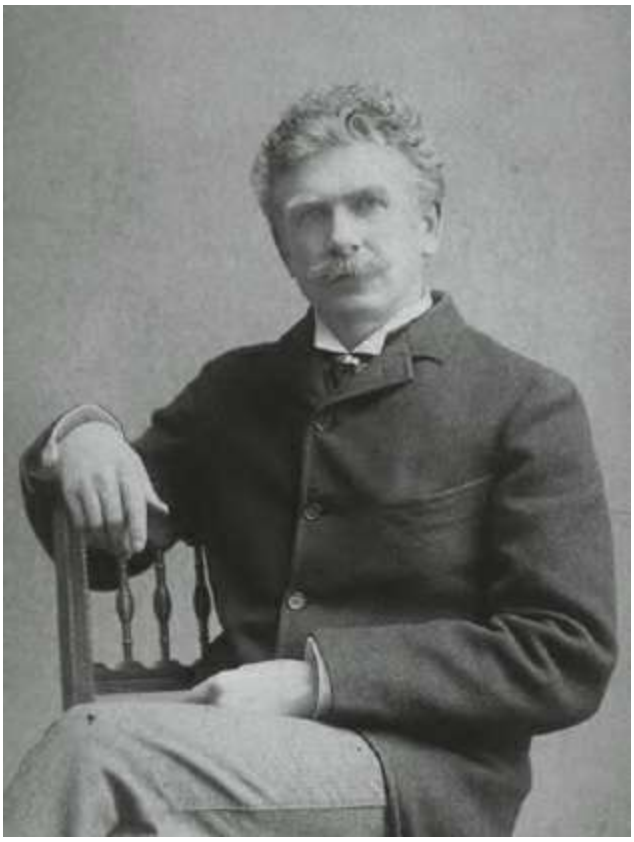
…So if he ventured into the Yalbac triangle or some other mysterious place in the general area, one thing that might have happened to him is a disappearance on the order of those experienced by Coh and Bascombe. The most obvious explanation of which—with a bow to the late Charles Hoy Fort—is that they were flown out of their glades by some unknown persons who then took them underground through the caves.[24]

While Gann's story, and Morrill's odd conclusion, seem so incredible as to be impossible, one can imagine that anyone associated with crystal skulls

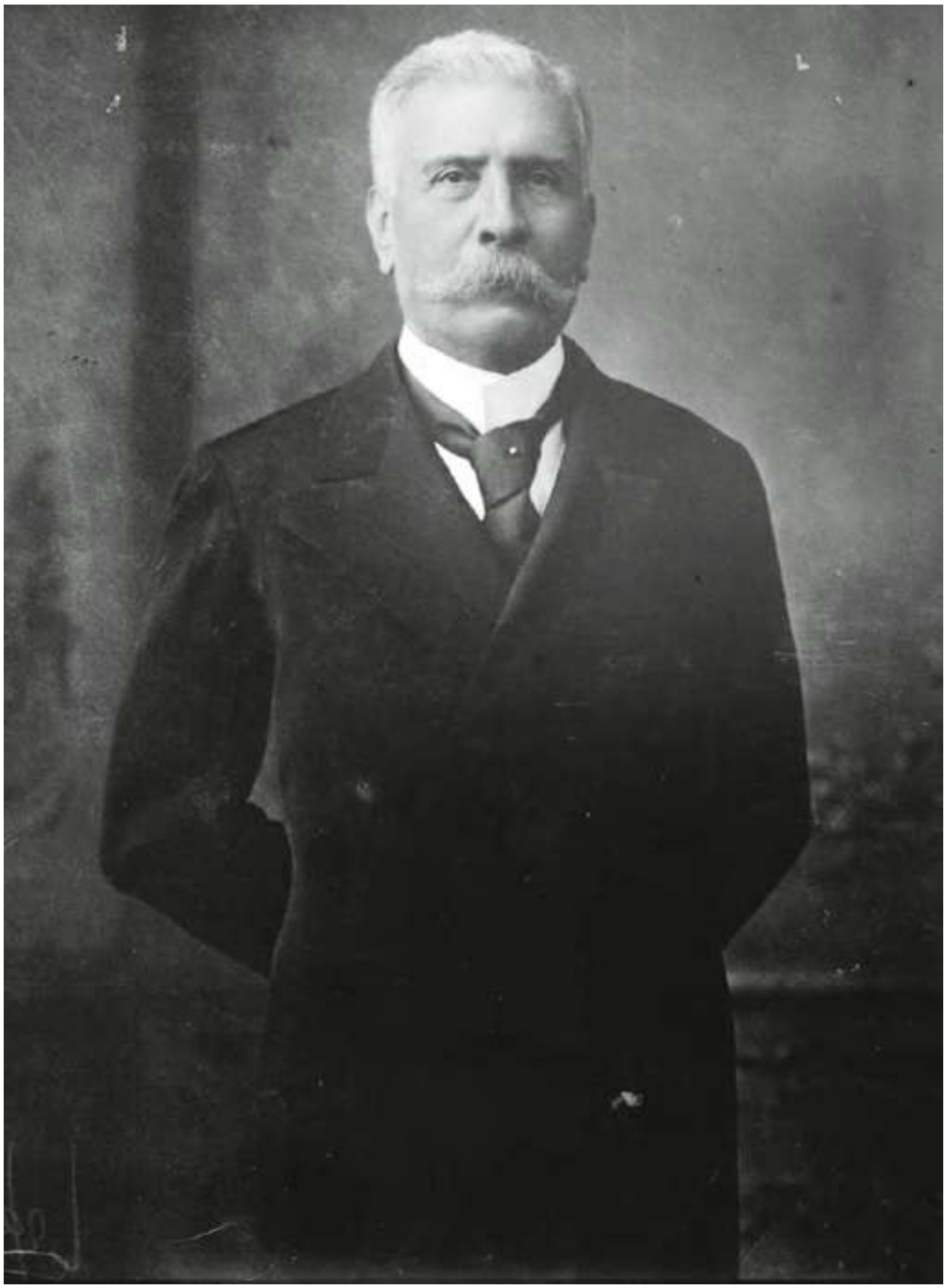
might eventually get some wild ideas. Given the modern reports of chupacabras and “flying humanoids” (of which some films exist) in Puerto Rico, Texas and Mexico over the past few decades, one can look at Father Serra’s report and Gann’s stories as being some of the earliest chronicles of these now seemingly common occurrences. The town of Monterrey in northern Mexico was terrorized in 2004 by a “flying witch” who at one point flew down onto the hood of a police officer’s patrol car and then reached inside the window to attack him. Mexican television reported on the curious incident for weeks.

Had some sort of flying humanoid-witch-monster flown off with the various people that Gann described and then abducted Ambrose Bierce? Sibley S. Morrill thought so— perhaps after gazing into a crystal skull.

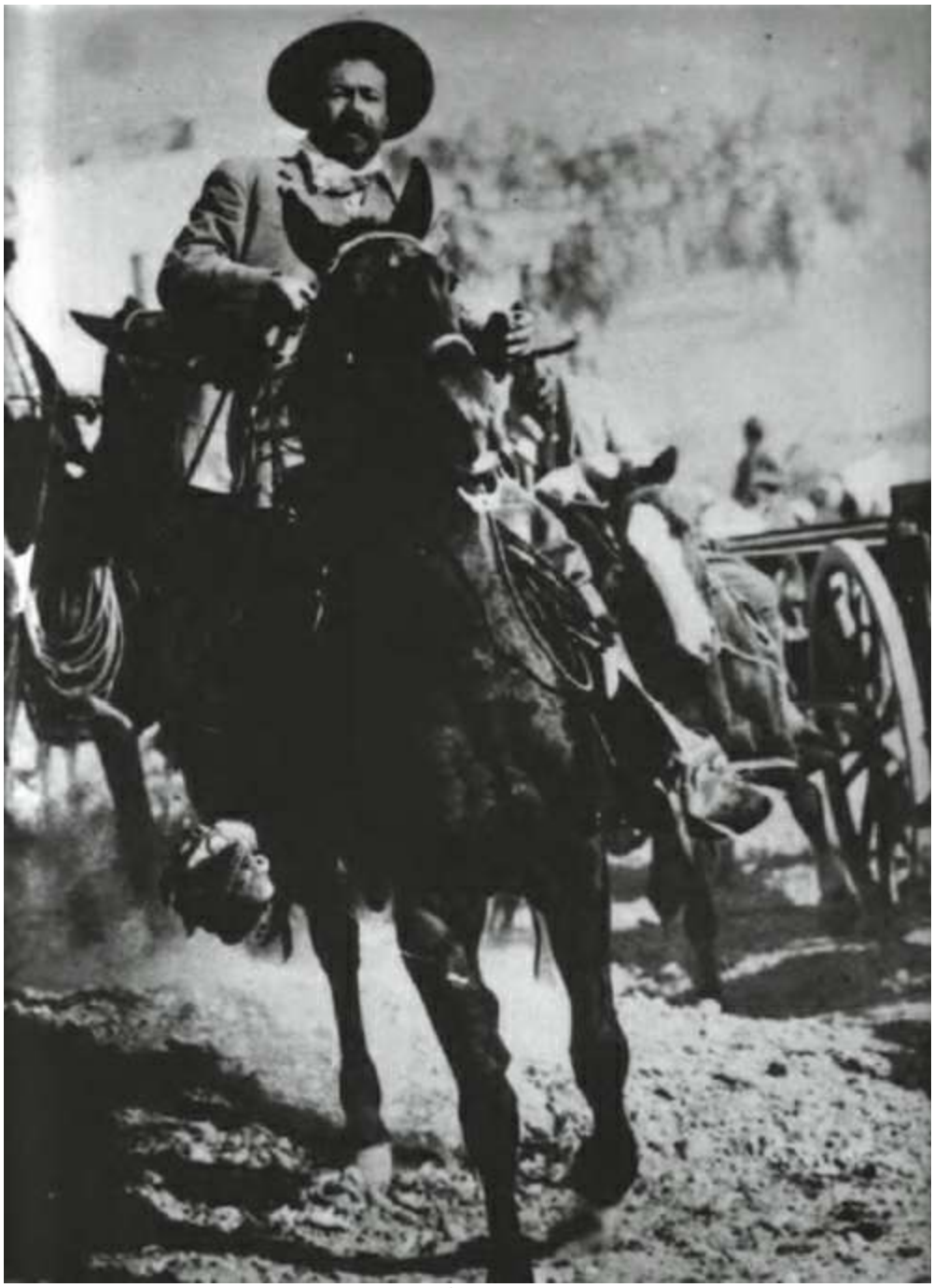
So we come to the end of Morrill’s amazing story, one peppered with flying monsters, poker players, adventurers, a collection of ancient crystal skulls, crooked art dealers, Mexican revolutionaries and lost Mayan cities in the Central American jungles. Yet, we have just touched the surface of the enigmas associated with the crystal skulls. Let us look now more closely at Mike Mitchell-Hedges and his association with the crystal skulls.



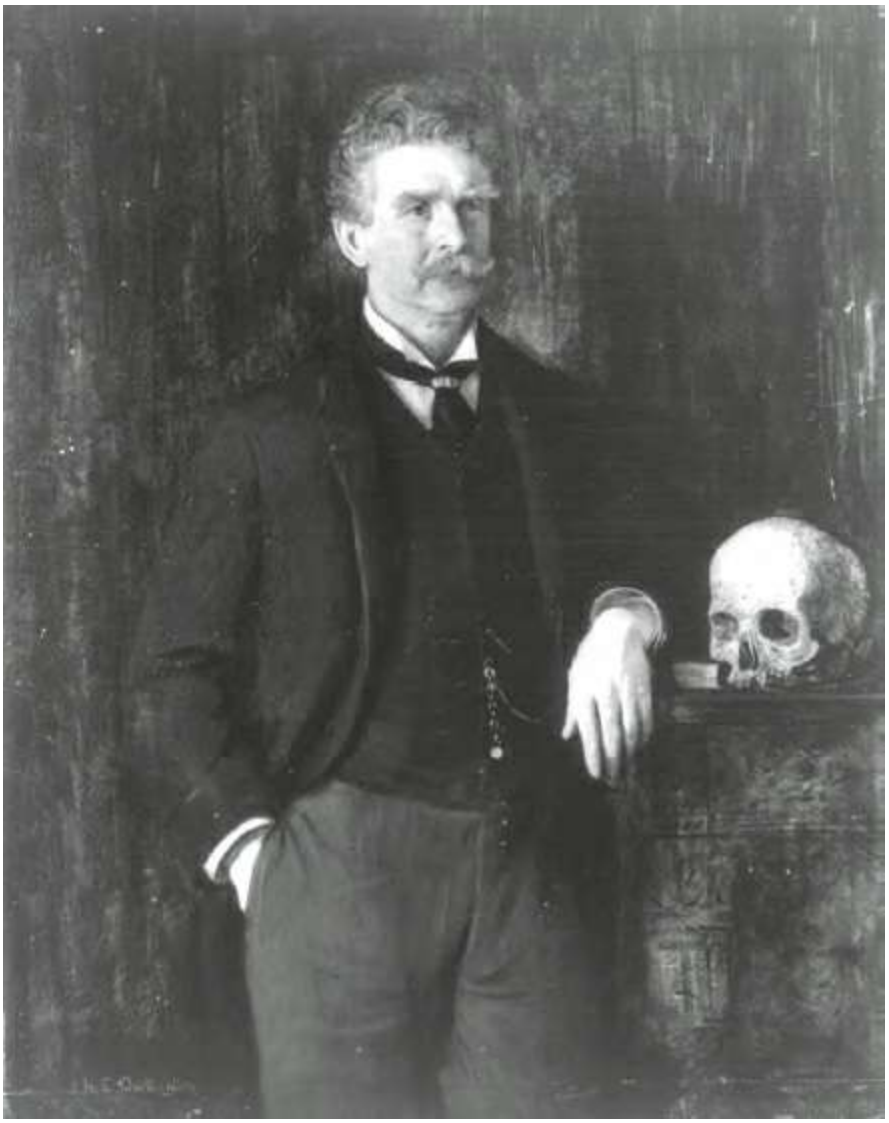
Ambrose Bierce, born 1842, disappeared mysteriously in Mexico in 1914.



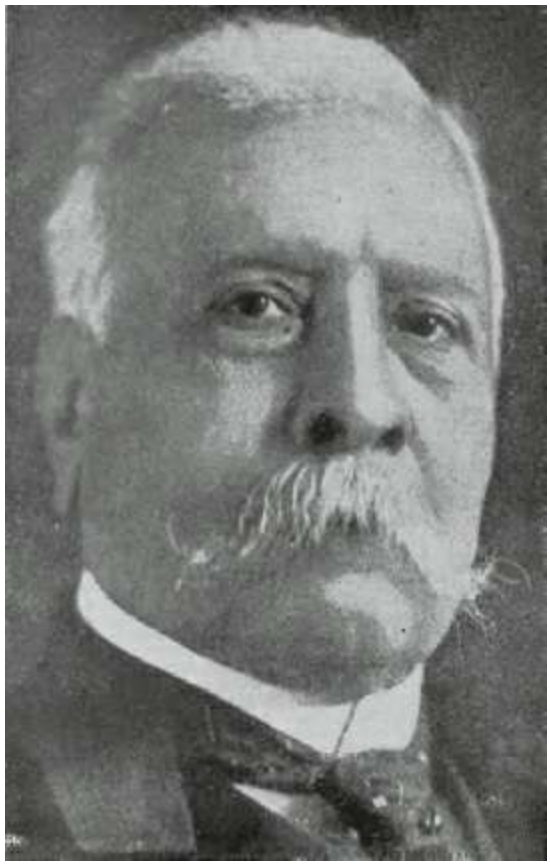
Porfirio Diaz (1830-1915), was President of Mexico off and on from 1876 to 1911. He was rumored to have a collection of crystal skulls.



Pancho Villa (1877-1923) during the battle of Ojinaga in 1916.



Ambrose Bierce, in a portait with a skull. He was fascinated by the occult and spent time with Pancho Villa before he disappeared. Some biographers think he died at the battle of Ojinaga, others that he traveled through Mexico and Central America, perhaps with Mike Mitchell-Hedges.



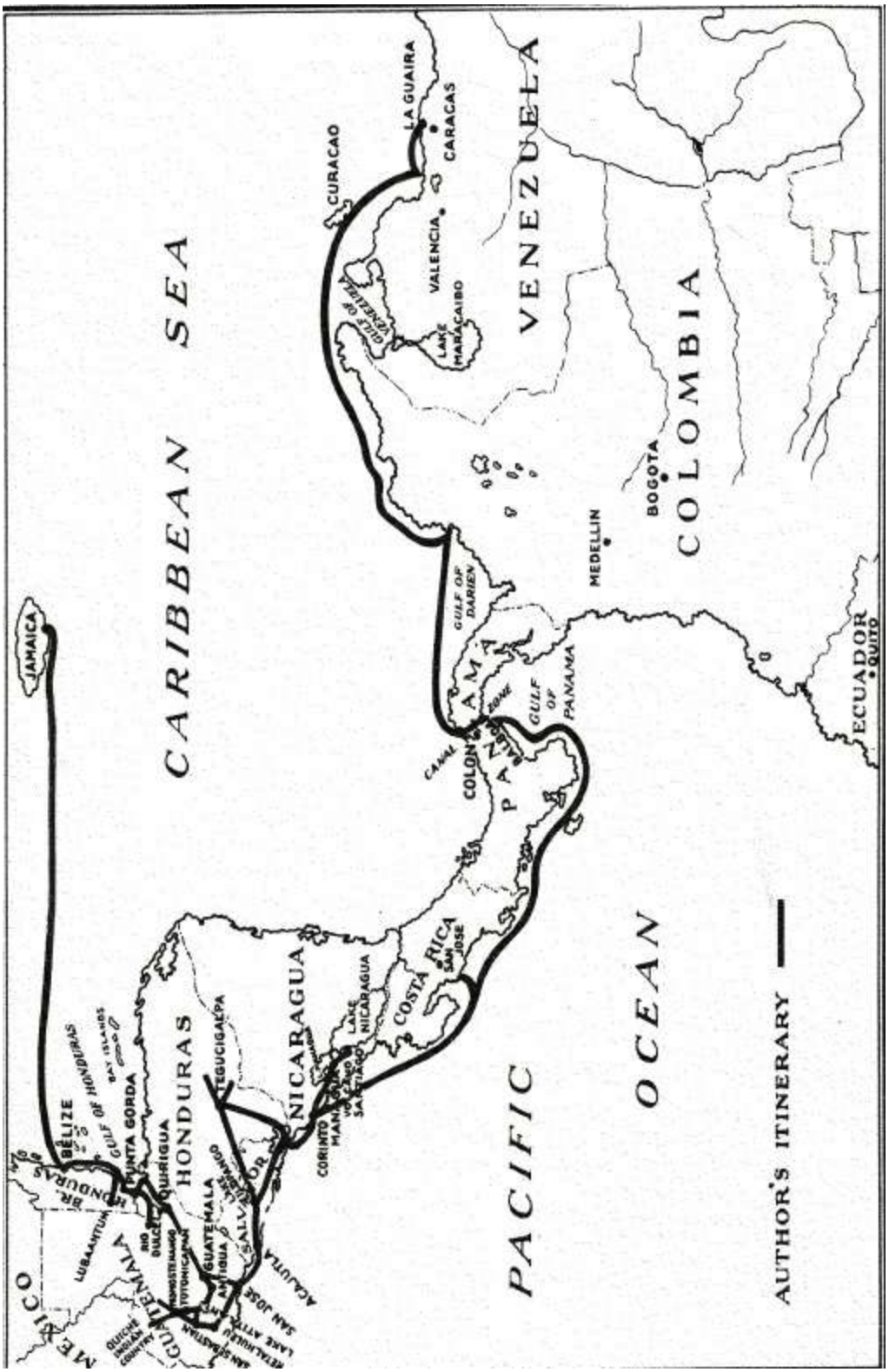
Top: Porfirio Diaz in a portait from 1908, shortly before going into exile in Paris. Bottom: A young Diaz in his military uniform.

GUERRA CIVIL
ARRIBA LOS IDEALES de BENITO JUAREZ
¡TIERRA Y LIBERTAD!
—Ingrese en el Servicio Militar Constitucional de—
Emiliano Zapata
HOMBRES CASADOS: Traigan sus esposas para cosinar, cargar provisiones y para preparar los rifles.

Poster for the revolution in Mexico, advertising for fighters in 1913.

Pancho Villa enjoys a smoke with some of his friends in 1920.

Mike Mitchell-Hedges, Lady Richmond Brown and Dr. Thomas Gann at the ruins of Lubaantun, circa 1924. Mitchell-Hedges claimed he had been Pancho Villa's prisoner.



Mitchell-Hedges' map of his travels from 1920 to 1930.

MARCH 10 1935

NEW YORK AMERICAN—A Paper for Peop

Atlantis Was No Myth but the Cradle Of American Races, Declares Hedges

AMAZING—Explorer Hedges (right) examining some astounding discoveries in the "Cradle of Civilization." Human heads reduced to fist size. Left, petrified stone head, once the wooden top of Chief-stick with skull showing same formation as that of the American Indian.

Excavations of Twenty-one Sites on Five Caribbean Islands Confirm His Theory of Pre-Flood Cataclysm, Says Noted Explorer

By F. A. MITCHELL-HEDGES,

Famous Explorer, F. R. G. S., F. L. S., F. R. G. S., F. R. A. I., F. Z. S., Member of the Maya Committee of the British Museum.

MANY weirdly strange mysteries are explained by discovery of evidences of the world's oldest known culture —a pre-Flood civilization—in the Bay Islands, off the coast of Honduras.

The most isolated primitive Indian tribes —I have lived among twenty—retain ancient rituals from some dim past:

A "Feast to the God of Fertility"; it is the Old World "Harvest Festival." A "wailing ceremony" for the dead: here we

American Races Born in Atlantis

A 1935 article in the *New York American* on Mitchell-Hedges and his expeditions to uncover Atlantis in the Caribbean.

One of Mitchell-Hedges' many articles in the *New York American*.

'CENTRAL AMERICA IS ONE OF THE CRADLES OF MANKIND,' DECLARES MITCHELL-HEDGES

Vast Cities of Antiquity Hitherto Unsuspected Lie Buried in Tropical Jungles'

By F. A. MITCHELL-HEDGES,

I believe one of the cradles of mankind to have been Central America; that the entire scientific conception of the aboriginal races of Central America and a large portion of South America will have to be revised.

Basing my conclusions upon the recent discoveries of prehistoric ruins and relics made in Honduras by the expedition headed by Lady Richmond Brown, and myself, as well as upon old surface explorations, I am convinced that still lying buried in the jungles of that part of the world are the remains of cities of an antiquity hitherto unsuspected.

Weird

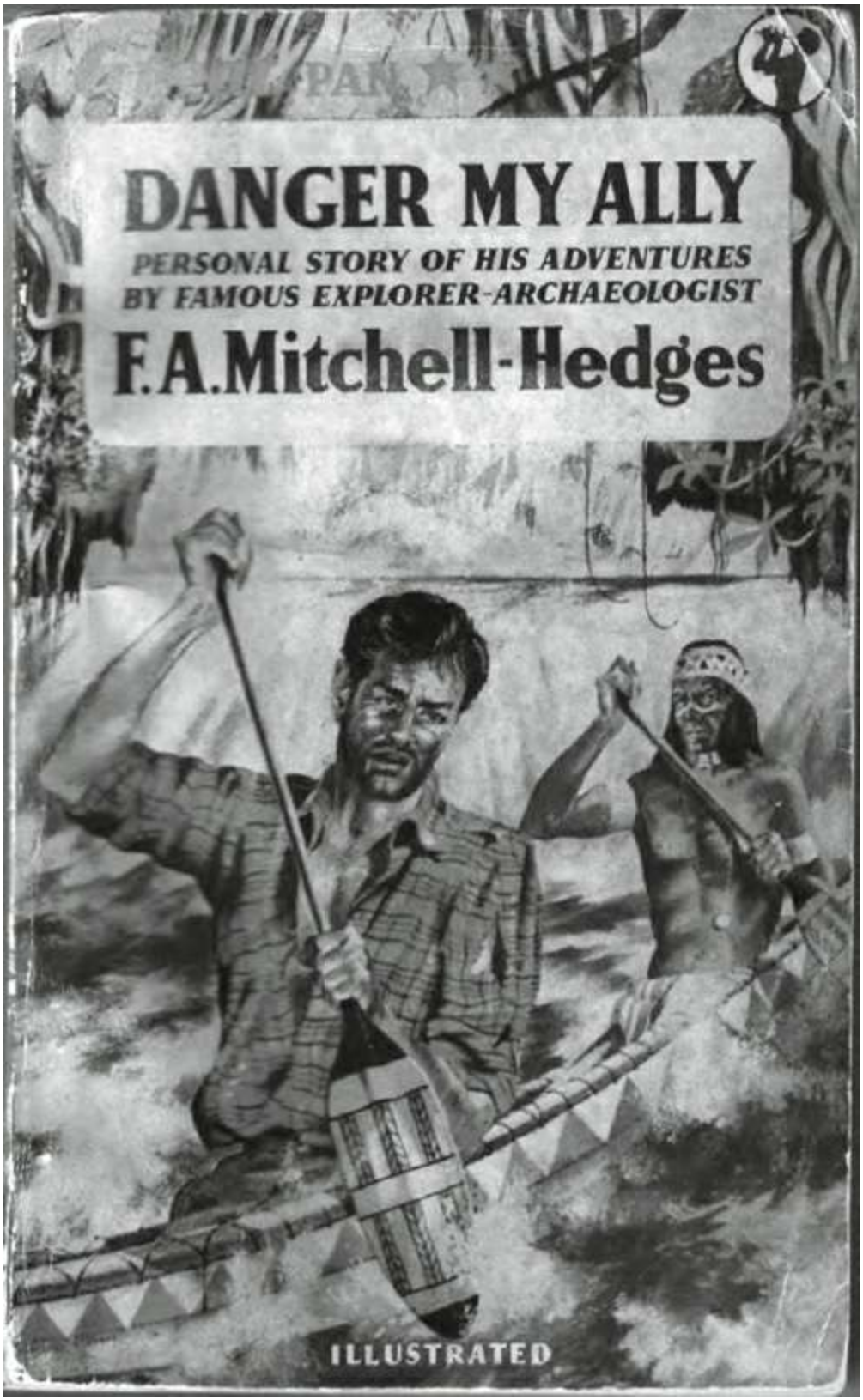
Explorer Hedges Finds Pre-Mayan City Buried Beneath Caribbean Sea

Exquisitely Painted Vases, Prehistoric Musical Instruments and Beads Uncovered in Hastily Abandoned Chambers

By F. A. MITCHELL-HEDGES,

WILL SHED

Mitchell-Hedges continually claimed that he had discovered evidence for Atlantis beneath the Caribbean.



The 1956 paperback edition of *Danger My Ally*.

Chapter 4

F.A. Mitchell-Hedges and the Skull of Doom

There is nothing new under the sun—
but there are lots of old things we don't know.
—Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

It is nearly impossible to discuss crystal skulls in any context without looking into the life of F.A. 'Mike' Mitchell-Hedges. He knew a lot of well-connected and interesting people, including J.P. Morgan, Pancho Villa, Ambrose Bierce and Dr. Thomas Gann.

A life of adventure was in store for Mitchell-Hedges (1882-1959): he left for America in 1899 when he was 17 years old, worked in New York and Montreal, played poker with J.P. Morgan and his friends, and then went to Mexico to "ride with Villa." Seemed like a fun thing to do in those days for certain young fellows.

Mitchell-Hedges then turned up in British Honduras at the lost city of Lubaantun in 1924, doing excavations with Dr. Gann and Lady Richmond Brown. Gann describes this period in his book, *Mystery Cities*: "On returning to Belize in December, 1924, I joined Lady Brown and Mr. Mitchell-Hedges, and, after a short holiday spent in fishing on the cays and reefs along the coast of British Honduras, we arrived, early in March, 1925, on board their yacht, the *Cara*, at Punta Gorda, the southernmost settlement in the colony, with a view to ascending the Rio Grande, and continuing, on its Columbia branch, our exploration of the ancient Maya ruins of Lubaantun, which we

had commenced the previous year."[3] Note that the "Belize" Gann refers to was the main city in the country called British Honduras in those days; now the whole country is called Belize.

Dr. Gann had a long history of archeological work in Belize, having directed the early investigation of Xunantunich which was conducted in 1894 and 1895. At the site, he uncovered and removed large quantities of burial goods, as well as some carved hieroglyphs which encircled Altar 1 at the site. Presently, the whereabouts of these glyphs and much of the burial goods remains unknown.

Dr. Gann, after his excavations at Xunantunich, was then ordered to investigate the ruins of Lubaantun in the southern most part of the country. Late in the 1800s, Lubaantun was reported to the British colonial government by the woodcutters of a settlement called Toledo near Punta Gorda. In 1903 the Governor of the colony commissioned Gann to investigate it. Gann explored and excavated the main structures around the central plaza and concluded that the site's population must have been large. His report was published in England in 1904.

In 1915, R.E. Merwin of Harvard University investigated the site, locating many more structures, recognizing a ball court and drawing the first plan. His excavation of the ball court revealed three carved stone markers, each depicting two men playing the ball game. Curiously these were the only carved stones found at Lubaantun.

Dr. Gann returned to Lubaantun in 1924 with Mitchell-Hedges and Lady Richmond Brown to supervise the excavations of parts of the city, and the team returned for more digs in subsequent years.

The area comprising northern Guatemala, Quintana Roo and Belize still abounds with many pyramids—and entire lost cities—that remain unexcavated within its dense and difficult jungles. That Mike Mitchell-Hedges and his companions had discovered or excavated some of these sites is a thrilling thought. The idea that a crystal skull may have been thrown into the mix, indicating that some form of high technology was part of the civilization that produced the artifact that was found, is even more thrilling.

Belize is a swampy part of the Central American coast that was occupied by British pirates and privateers in the 1600s. The Pope had declared the New World divided between Spain and Portugal in 1494, effectively leaving out all other European countries including France, Holland and England. Therefore, the occupation of the Caribbean and South America by French, Dutch and English merchants and explorers was done bit by bit, with pirates and privateers occupying remote islands or uninhabited sections of the coast. The only such foothold in Central America was British Honduras and many of the islands along the extremely long coral reef that stretches along the coast in this area. British privateer woodcutters inhabited this coast for several centuries, and with native help, made a fine living supplying good timber to ships at the various small ports.

British Honduras was a pivotal foothold in Central America for England, as were British Guiana in South America and such Caribbean islands as Jamaica and Barbados. British Honduras became a Crown Colony in 1871 and officially renamed itself “Belize” in 1961.

Guatemala has always claimed Belize, and though its protests are minor now, there was always the threat of Guatemala retaking its stolen territory. The early days of British Honduras were shaky and the British, though a superior naval power to Guatemala, were wary of possible attacks.

Furthermore, many other areas of Central America and Mexico were extremely unstable in the years following 1871 and the establishment of British Honduras as a Crown Colony. Therefore, Britain desired to place agents, or “spies,” in the area to explore, investigate, and report on, what was happening in the turbulent world of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Into this world came F.A. “Mike” Mitchell-Hedges.

F.A. Mitchell-Hedges was a fascinating person, and in some ways, his life was very much a model for an Indiana Jones sort of character. After his adventure in Mexico with Pancho Villa in 1914, he returned to England and then suddenly showed up in Canada again, where he found and adopted young Anna.

They journeyed together to California where he put her in a boarding school and then went to Mazatlan and Honduras. For the next several years he traveled in Central America. He says in *Danger My Ally*, “I now set out

the task of discovering Central America. During the next two years I traveled from Spanish Honduras to Guatemala into Nicaragua, and also into the tiny country of San Salvador."

He returned to England again, by about 1920. He visited his ailing friend and mistress, the wealthy Lady Richmond Brown, whose doctors had told her not travel but to rest. She refused, and instead bought a yacht for the two of them, the *Cara*, and they set sail for the Caribbean.

Starting in 1921, the pair plus crew and Mitchell-Hedges' secretary Jane Harvey Houlson, cruised and explored the Bay Islands off Honduras, the San Blas Islands off Panama and the area around Jamaica. They become "as gods" on one small island, according to a chapter in one of Mitchell-Hedges' books, *Land of Fear and Wonder*.[4]

He, and apparently Lady Richmond, believed that artifacts which he had found in the Bay Islands pointed to a highly advanced civilization that was now beneath the water, and they equated it with Atlantis. Mitchell-Hedges had a penchant for mystical sciences and secret societies, and championed the cause of lost civilizations and Atlantis. One might say that his acquiring the crystal skull was the culmination of a life of adventure, archeology and flirtations with the occult. In this way he was very much one of the models for Indiana Jones.

His search for Atlantis and sea monsters took him through several books, and numerous articles for New York and London magazines and newspapers. He would declare that he had found Atlantis beneath the Caribbean in his articles and frequent radio appearances.

Mike Mitchell-Hedges and his adventurous female friends first appeared in the British popular media in his 1923 book *Battles with Giant Fish*, published by his friends at Duckworth in London. Duckworth went on to publish a slew of works by Mitchell-Hedges and his friends over the next decade.

The next book published was Lady Richmond Brown's *Unknown Tribes—Uncharted Seas* (1924),[9] then Gann's *Mystery Cities* (1925), Mitchell-Hedges' deep sea fishing book *Battling with Monsters of the Sea* (1929),[6] then his first autobiography *Land of Wonder and Fear* (1931),[4] *The White*

Tiger (1931),[5] and finally, an interesting book by his secretary, Jane Harvey Houlson entitled *Blue Blaze* (1934).[10]

Both Brown and Houlson are depicted in formal portraits in their books with guns. Houlson appears on the cover of her book *Blue Blaze* sporting a rifle, and Brown in a great portrait done for her where she has a pistol tucked into her belt. Carrying plenty of weapons on yachts was always necessary, and the sailors had to be ready to use them— and both women were apparently crack shots. Mitchell-Hedges was a tall and striking man, ready to teach anyone his two-fisted-tales-of-Atlantis! This team, along with its crewmembers, was probably not one to be messed with, and they had their shootouts, as chronicled in the books.

Mitchell-Hedges did a lot of lecturing and radio shows when not traveling and he was known to be a tall-tale teller, as well as something of a braggart. He was accused of lying on a number of occasions. While he did apparently fabricate some tales, it should be pointed out that stories like his involving adventures in wild, remote places are inherently hard to document. The fact that he continued to be sponsored by the likes of the Heye Museum, the British Museum and the *Daily Mail*, must have meant that they had a considerable amount of trust in him and that he actually performed to their satisfaction. He is known to have contributed artifacts to the British Museum.

On top of that, we saw in the previous chapter that Morrill surmises he may have been a British agent, funded by the British government, and therefore, subject to the British Secrets Act which required a mandatory sentence of two years hard labor for any violations. He may actually have been forced to make up stories and change facts in his books!

These books were popular during their time and *The White Tiger* was republished in a number of mass-run mini-hardbacks for the troops and other far-flung readers of English books during WWII. *The White Tiger* is a good, fast paced adventure novel full of inspiring self-sacrifice and good character, qualities that were so important during that time.

Mitchell-Hedges went on to write after the war *Pancho Villa's Prisoner* (1947)[8] and then his final and most popular book, *Danger My Ally* (1954)[1] — which is the first time the crystal skull is mentioned.

What is curious, according to many researchers, is why, in all of these books, the crystal skull—the Skull of Doom—is never mentioned, until *Danger My Ally*. Is it that the authors were sworn to secrecy over its origin? Did Mike Mitchell-Hedges only acquire the skull late in his life, after all of

his other adventures, remarkable as they were? Had it some secret occult origin he could not reveal?

Strangely, he devotes only three paragraphs to his crystal skull in the book, and these few paragraphs were even removed from the American edition, which was published later. He says, referring to a trip to South Africa in 1947:

> We took with us also the sinister Skull of Doom of which much has been written. How it came into my possession I have reason for not revealing.
>
> The Skull of Doom is made of pure rock crystal and according to scientists it must have taken over 150 years, generation after generation working all the days of their lives, patiently rubbing down with sand an immense block of rock crystal until finally the perfect Skull emerged.
>
> It is at least 3,600 years old and according to legend was used by the High Priest of the Maya when performing esoteric rites. It is said that when he willed death with the help of the skull, death invariably followed. It has been described as the embodiment of all evil. I do not wish to try and explain [these] phenomena.[1]

A photograph of the skull is reproduced in the book with the caption, “The Skull of Doom, dating back at least 3,600 years, and taking about 150 years to rub down with sand from a block of pure rock crystal, nearly as hard as diamond. It is stated in legend that it was used by a high priest of the Maya to concentrate and will death. It is said to be the embodiment of all evil; several people who have cynically laughed at it have died, others have been stricken and become seriously ill.”

The popular story of the discovery of the Mitchell-Hedges Skull is that it took place in the later period of excavations at Lubaantun in 1927. Anna was supposedly digging in a collapsed altar and adjoining wall when she discovered the life-size crystal skull on her seventeenth birthday. Three months later a matching jawbone was discovered twenty-five feet from the altar. And thus, one of the world’s strangest ancient objects came to the attention of the world. But, in fact, not a word was said about it for years

afterward

Therefore, it would seem that its origin is more mysterious than young Anna discovering it on her birthday. In fact, there are several major flaws in that story, which will be discussed later in this book. One is that the skull really belonged to Mitchell-Hedges, who willed it Anna at his death in 1959.

A different possibility is that the skull came from another Central American ancient city, or possibly one in Mexico, and was looted from some pyramid. Mitchell-Hedges then bought the skull as a stolen artifact. It would have been in nobody's interest to reveal the origin of the skull, therefore his statement that he had reasons for not revealing how he acquired it.

One wild theory was that the skull was a 12,000-year-old relic from Atlantis that had been handed down through the Knights Templar and ultimately came into the possession of the inner circle of the top Masonic Lodge. Mitchell-Hedges was an inner Mason and may have somehow acquired the skull either through the secret society or as part of a gambling debt. He then introduced it to the world through the ingenious device of a lost city.

This is the story told as fiction in Mitchell-Hedges' only novel, *The White Tiger*.[5] This 1931 book, with no illustrations, has thirty-two chapters of rip-roaring jungle adventure written in the style of the popular movie serial cliffhangers. In the book, a thinly veiled Mitchell-Hedges is the hero, Richard Hampden—dubbed by the natives "The White Tiger"—who wakes up in the second chapter with a mysterious woman, Diana (presumably Lady Richmond Brown in reality).

What is important to our quest for where Mitchell-Hedges got his crystal skull, is that he gives a hint of it in chapters fifteen and sixteen: "The Lost City" and "The Treasure of the Aztecs." In these chapters, the White Tiger is taken to a lost city in the jungles of Central America and shown a secret treasure of the Aztecs, hidden by Montezuma as the Aztec empire crumbled. The White Tiger was trusted by the natives as a sort of avatar to whom they could reveal the secret treasure hidden in an empty city deep in the jungles.

Says Mitchell-Hedges in *The White Tiger*:

Muganii, the Wise and Ancient, knowing his end was near, had at the last initiated the While Tiger into the great secret of the Indians, rigidly guarded by them for centuries. The hidden treasure of the Aztecs was no longer simply a legend.

Suspended on the cord hung round the neck of the White Tiger by Muganii was a jadeite plaque, and cut into this was charted the exact position of the hoard, and the hieroglyphics though much worn with age, were still legible.

The old witch-doctor had whispered of the journey that must be undertaken and the dangers and difficulties that lay in front of the White Tiger before he could reach the almost inaccessible spot where the treasure was hidden. Muganii had died knowing that what would be impossible to most men the White Lord would accomplish; that the hardships of the journey would be overcome, the dangers surmounted and the gold when discovered, used well and wisely.

His confidence had not been misplaced, for at once the White Tiger had set out on a journey which was now nearing its end. His sufferings will never be known. Only a man of indomitable will could have withstood the horrors of swamp and jungle through which he had passed. Of the Indians who went with him seventeen had died—fever and the poisonous insect-pests had taken their toll. Even their Chief with his iron constitution showed the effects of the privations and the physical strain he had endured.

As he lay stretched out in a hammock in the insufferable heat, the sweat oozing from every pore in his body, for the first time doubt entered his mind. What if Muganii’s secret were but a fable after all, and the data engraved on the jadeite plaque merely a legend? He thrust the thought aside. Impossible. The old witch-doctor knew. The treasure of Montezuma undoubtedly existed.

At the first flush of dawn on the following morning they broke camp and the weary Indians recommenced their task of hacking a trail through the solid undergrowth of the jungle. Sweating, eaten alive by myriads of insects, ever on the alert for the deadly bushmaster snake that infested this region, hour after hour they toiled on. Mid-day came and went. The afternoon wore away. With hardly a pause, spurred on by the hope that they were now within a short distance of deliverance from the tortures of the past weeks, they fought their way.

A cry broke from those ahead. The bush was thinning, and their advance grew more rapid. All day they had been rising steadily; another mile of undergrowth and then even this ceased, and before them lay a vast open space.

The White Tiger stared. Sloping gently down from where he stood was a broad valley. Beyond, the ground rose in a natural plateau. Built upon this a towering citadel gleamed like frosted ice as the late afternoon sun struck full upon it with dazzling effect.

The Indians were shaking with superstitious fear. A stillness lay over everything; uncanny after the eternal drone of the jungle's insect life, which had magically died away as they emerged from the underbrush.

The White Tiger shaded his eyes. This was no mirage, neither was be dreaming. Before him lay revealed the secret handed down through generations. Muganii, by passing it on with his dying breath, had enabled the white man to stand here on the threshold of a dead city with the knowledge that somewhere amidst the gleaming pyramids was stored the gold of the Aztecs.

They had reached a secret city in the jungle, and now he expected to be shown the lost treasure of the Aztecs. Mitchell-Hedges then writes in chapter sixteen:

The climax however was yet to come. As they passed into the temple, the priest impressively led him to one of the massive walls, placing is hand in a certain manner upon what appeared to be a solid block of stone. At his touch it rolled slowly back disclosing a flight of steps down which they passed. A lamp which the priest carried flung weird patches of light into the darkness. On and on down countless steps—into the very bowels of the earth until again the priest pressed the apparently solid rock barring their progress. With scarcely a sound the stone block turned as easily as if on oiled hinges and before them yawned a long tunnel. Passing through this they descended another flight of steps. For a third time the priest touched the wall and a huge stone rolled aside. Then in the dim light of the lantern the White Tiger saw that he was in an immense vault cut out of the living rock.

Before him, piled in endless confusion, lay the treasure of the Aztecs.

Gold chalices, bowls, jars and other vessels of every size and shape;

immense plaques and strange ornaments all glittered dully. Of precious stones there were none, but many rare *chalchihuitl* (jadeite pendants). Masks of obsidian and shells beautifully inlaid were all heaped together with heads carved from solid blocks of crystal. Legend had not exaggerated the treasure of the Aztecs. Almost boundless wealth lay at the disposal of the White Tiger.

Bloodshed, rape and sickening torture, that the wretched Aztecs had undergone at the hands of the Spanish Conquistadores, had failed to wring from them this secret hiding-place. True to the oath which had they had sworn to their gods they had died rather than that their hated conquerors should benefit.

With this vast fortune a man could rise to any height, indulge in any luxury, purchase any title, and become one of the exalted of the earth. But the Indians judged, and rightly, that to the White Lord these things were of no account and that only for their regeneration would this treasure be used.

The High Priest ceremoniously placed all at the disposal of El Tigre Blanco and instructed him how to gain entrance to the vault. Then turning, the two men left the chamber, the great stone doors rolling back to place behind them.[5]

And thusly, Mitchell-Hedges has the White Tiger (himself) acquiring the lost treasure of the Aztecs. He mentions that, “Masks of obsidian and shells beautifully inlaid were all heaped together with heads carved from solid blocks of crystal.” Heads carved out of solid blocks of crystal were probably crystal skulls, but he does not exactly specify this. Yet, it seems that Mitchell-Hedges, in a fictional book published in 1931, is implying that there existed a treasure that included some crystal skulls and other crystal artifacts.

Had Mike Mitchell-Hedges actually been shown a secret city that contained crystal skulls and other treasures handed down for generations? Perhaps he had acquired the Skull of Doom at this lost city. It is a fabulous thought, one that he hinted at in his radio appearances. His era was one in which radio appearances and lectures, including slides and music, were common and could generate quite a bit of money depending on how many people bought tickets to attend the event on any given evening.

Perhaps Mike Mitchell-Hedges bought the crystal skull in London to fulfill his dreams of owning Aztec treasure; perhaps he acquired it in a poker game or bought it from Pancho Villa; maybe he was given it by adoring Mayans in a lost city; maybe he is the one who brought it to Central America—we may never know.

There are other mysteries associated with the ruins at Lubaantun, beside the crystal skull. Gann originally thought them to be the oldest Mayan ruins ever discovered. They were originally known as the Rio Grande ruins (because of the nearby river of that name) and were introduced to the world in an article in the *Illustrated London News* of July 26, 1924. In the article, Dr. Gann says, "On a second pyramid we found a cave-in, stone-lined chambers, from one of which we endeavored to clear out the debris of stone and rubbish with which it was filled, but soon had to desist, as the great weight of the stones took the combined exertions of all our laborers to recover through the narrow aperture at the top, and we soon realized that, if we were to do any other work at all in the limited time at our disposal, we must leave these vaults within the pyramids till later." These vaults have never been excavated although subsequent archeological expeditions were sent there, and in fact, most of Lubaantun is just as it was found by Gann, though cleared of the surrounding jungle.

Gann believed the city was older than any other Mayan city yet discovered. In the *Illustrated London News* article Gann concludes:

> Before leaving, we christened the city 'Lubaantun'—literally 'the place of fallen stones' in the Mayan language. This city differs from all other known Maya cities, in that there are no stone palaces and temples standing upon the great pyramidical substructures, and in the entire absence of stone sculptures and of the great monoliths upon which were inscribed the days of their erection, put up at twenty-year intervals, and later at five-year intervals by the Maya throughout Central America and Yucatan.
>
> It would appear from the absence of stone sculptures, temples and palaces that these ruins antedate Copan, Quirigua, Uaxactun and other cities of the Old Empire, the earliest recorded dates at which go back to about the beginning of the Christian Era, for it is almost certain that prior to this Maya dates were recorded on wood, and the earliest temples and palaces constructed of the same material.

Gann believed that Lubaantun had been built circa 2000 BC and the absence of any hieroglyphs, steles or dates of any kind were evidence to him that the city had been built before any of the classical sites that are now so famous.

He makes a good point, but Gann is overlooking a very important idea that derives from his evidence. This is that Lubaantun *is not a Mayan city at all.*

Curiously, Lubaantun is generally dated as being a fairly late city in the Mayan empire. When the Cambridge archaeologist Norman Hammond excavated at the city in 1970, he ascribed the occupation as being from 730 to 890 AD, the typical dates of cities at the final decline of the Mayan civilization. Hammond theorized that the main economy of Lubaantun was the cultivation of cacao beans, which were used as a form of currency throughout the Mayan realm.

So on one hand we have Gann and Mitchell-Hedges believing that Lubaantun is the oldest Mayan city ever found, having been built 4,000 years ago, while more traditional archaeologists are ascribing a date of 730 AD to the structure. The fact that hieroglyphs, steles or even typical construction techniques of the Maya are totally absent at Lubaantun does not seem to enter into their calculations.

I was impressed by the construction of the buildings at Lubaantun when I first visited there over 15 years ago. The ruins were quite unlike anything else I had seen in all of Central America. I then learned that Lubaantun is unique in the Mayan world for being a city built out of precision cut stones and fitted without mortar. It is the only Mayan city built in this way. The structures at Lubaantun have rounded corners, a characteristic that is also highly unusual and is only seen at some sites along the Usumacinta River to the north. Clearly, Lubaantun is an unusual site.

Walking around the city, it was the precision cut stones that impressed me the most. Having spent quite a bit of time in Peru, the similarity in the construction technique of Lubaantun and the amazing cities of the high Andes around Cuzco (Machu Picchu for example) was quite striking. Lubaantun reminded me not of Tikal or Copán in Honduras, but of far more mysterious cities in South America.

Another city that I had seen that had a similar appearance to that of

Lubaantun was the city of Lixus on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. Lixus is a Phoenician city that was later taken over by the Romans after the Punic Wars. Could it be that Lubaantun was a Phoenician city? Both cities were built out of precision cut stones fitted without mortar. Was there a connection?

Was Lubaantun a Phoenician city in the new world? Perhaps their main trading base along the eastern Yucatan coast? Did Phoenician ships coming from Carthage, Tarshish (modern day Cadiz) or Lixus arrive at Lubaantun to trade circa 1000 BC?

If the Mayas were already well established along this coast and the northern Yucatan, perhaps the Phoenicians were able to get a trading concession, much as the British and Portuguese were able to do with the Emperors of China in setting up their trade cities of Hong Kong and Macao.

One clue to support this theory was use of special dyes by both the Mayas and the Phoenicians. We do not really know what the Phoenicians called themselves. Our term for their civilization is derived from a Greek term meaning the "Purple People." It was used to describe the Phoenicians because they wore beautiful purple robes that they dyed with a rare and special dye derived from a sea snail.

In an article on Mayan dyes by Laura de los Heros that was published in the *Aeorcaribe* magazine *Kukulcán* (Year 3, No. 11, February 1991), it is shown that the Maya used the exact same dye. "In the course of the trading, the Mayas also received plants and animals that produced coloring substances. Perhaps the most valuable dyes were the scarlet extracted from the cochineal bug that lives as a parasite in the nopal cactus, and the purple derived from the inky secretions of seasnails along the Pacific coast."

Where did the Mayas learn this purple dye secret? Perhaps from the Phoenicians, or, on the other hand, perhaps it was the Phoenicians who learned this secret from the Mayas! It would appear possible that Lubaantun was a Phoenician city, not Mayan.

With the excavation of Lubaantun—a megalithic city— had Mitchell-Hedges, Brown and Houlson finally found their proof of Atlantis in the Caribbean? Here was what appeared to be the pre-Mayan city they had been

looking for. Indeed, if it is as old as they were thinking, then it would also probably be related to the Olmecs. Their belief was that megalithic buildings and objects—like the huge stone Olmec heads—were all linked to ancient Atlantis, including the giant ruins in South America, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.

Not all of the myriad ruins to be found in Mesoamerica were from Atlantis, however; many of the cities were more recently built by the Mayas, Toltecs or Aztecs. The thing that sets apart the truly ancient work is the use of giant stones, or megaliths, like the colossal stone heads of the Olmecs, or the huge doorways at Mitla and Monte Alban. Such a city is Lubaantun, and the lack of Mayan hieroglyphs underlines that it is probably not from that civilization. Mitchell-Hedges could not show the world a sunken city in the Mediterranean—that proved impossible—but he could show them Lubaantun.

The skull supposedly found at Lubaantun had many unusual properties, and was studied in the mid-1960s for several years by Frank Dorland.

Frank Dorland was a well-known art conservator in the San Francisco Bay Area and is profiled in Richard Garvin's 1973 book *The Crystal Skull*.[2] He was given permission by the Mitchell-Hedges estate to submit the quartz skull to tests conducted at the Hewlett-Packard Laboratories at Santa Clara, California. The Mitchell-Hedges skull had been kept in his house off and on for over six years, and Dorland said he occasionally witnessed the skull glow, and also perceived that strange noises and smells came from the skull at times.

In the last days that Dorland had the skull, it was submersed in a benzyl alcohol bath at the Hewlett-Packard Laboratories, with a beam of light passing through the submerged skull. It was during this test that is was noted that both the skull and jaw piece had come from the same quartz block. This made the carving of the skull even more remarkable than previously supposed.

The crystallographers at Hewlett-Packard also discovered at that time that the skull and jaw had been carved with total disregard to the natural crystal axis in the quartz. This might be expected of ancient skulls, but not so much of modern ones. The reason for this is that the tools used in modern crystal

cutting vibrate, and can fracture and break a crystal if it is cut wrong. Therefore, the first procedure is always to determine the axis, and work along it during the subsequent shaping process.

According to Dorland, he could not find evidence of the use of metal tools. He looked for signs of any telltale scratch marks on the crystal using a high-powered microscope for analysis. From tiny patterns in the quartz near the carved surfaces, Dorland determined the skull was first meticulously chiseled into a rough form, probably using diamonds, as something that hard would be needed. The final polishing and shaping of the skull, Dorland believed, was done by applying innumerable applications of solutions of water and silicon-crystal sand to the skull. In theory this was done by hand—say by polishing the skull with a leather rag that had been doused in the solution, over and over again.

The problem with that, Dorland suggested, was if these were the processes used, then, he calculated, it would mean that a total of 300 man-years of continuous labor was spent in making the skull. Mitchell-Hedges in *Danger My Ally* suggested that it took 150 years to make. If it took hundreds of years to make a skull like this, it would seem to indicate that these objects were very important to the cultures that produced them. But that is assuming that the Mitchell-Hedges Skull, and other similar skulls, are indeed ancient. In the case of the Mitchell-Hedges Skull, we have no more recent testing to confirm or contest Dorland's results.

Another curious aspect of the skull is that the zygomatic arches (the bone arches extending along the sides and front of the cranium, or cheekbones) are meticulously separated from the skull piece, and using principles of modern optics, they act as light wells, or "pipes," to channel light up from the base of the skull into the eye sockets. Dorland discovered that the eye sockets themselves are miniature concave lenses that transfer light from a source below, into the upper cranium. If that were not enough, one final effect is achieved by a "ribbon prism" located in the interior of the skull, along with tiny light tunnels, that magnifies and brightens any objects held beneath the skull.

Garvin in *The Crystal Skull* said he believed that the skull was designed to be placed over an upward-shining beam that would illuminate the skull and make the eyes glow. Because of the prisms, or "light wells," inside the skull near the eye sockets, there would be various prismatic effects which would illuminate the entire skull and cause the sockets to become glowing eyes. Dorland performed experiments using this technique, and reported the skull "lights up like it was on fire."

Furthermore, the jaw piece fits precisely onto the skull at two polished sockets, which allow the jaw to move up and down. The skull can be balanced exactly where two tiny holes are drilled on each side of the base, standing on metal or wooden rods. So perfect is the balance at these two holes that the slightest breeze causes the skull to nod back and forth, the jaw opening and closing as counter-weight. Alternatively, the skull could be manipulated from below, if the skull were seated on some sort of hollow altar or box, and it would appear to be "talking." The visual effect would be that of a moving skull, talking and articulating, lit up with glowing eyes—an astonishing and impressive sight in deed! Thus, it appears that the maker had knowledge of weights and fulcrum points, and wanted to make a crystal skull that would appear to be speaking. Indeed, one of the books on the Mitchell-Hedges skull in the 1980s was called *The Skull Speaks*.[42]

Dorland believed that this "talking" skull was meant to be used as an oracular device. One can imagine the very strange scene of some person being brought into a room or ancient temple, and then being shown a glowing crystal skull on an altar. When this glowing skull begins to talk, with its mouth actually moving, the viewer could be very impressed—and frightened. Suddenly, what would seem impossible—a glowing, talking crystal skull—was appearing before their very eyes! Perhaps, after some choice words from the skull, the priests direct the astonished person to another chamber where they can give a substantial financial contribution to the church or temple associated with the glowing, talking skull.

Garvin quotes an employee of Hewlett-Packard named Jim Pruett who says, "One of the guys kidded that he might be able to duplicate it if you gave him a year and $100,000. There's no way of proving its age. A lot of the occult aura— tales of mystery and evil—that have sprung up around it could easily come from its eyes. By shifting a light source or when an observer moves his view even slightly, an infinite variety of refraction patterns can be seen. They could be quite hypnotic. I look on it as a very beautiful work of

art irrespective of its age or authenticity. There's no denying that."[2]

Says Garvin in conclusion, "It would be virtually impossible today—in the time when man climbs the mountains of the moon—to duplicate this achievement. The lenses, light pipes and prisms display a technical competence that the human race only achieved recently. In fact, there is no one on the globe today who would attempt to duplicate the skull. It was carved with total disregard to the natural axis of quartz crystal and virtual disregard for the fragility of the substance itself."[2]

Finally, Dorland says this about the odd effects that the Mitchell-Hedges skull apparently causes:

> The supranatural properties of the skull are puzzling, of course, but they are very much in existence and are demonstrable to any sensitive person. The skull exhibits and transmits to the human brain all the five senses: taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing. The skull changes visibly in color and transparency, it exhibits its own unmistakable odor when it cares to, it plants thoughts in viewers' minds, it makes people thirsty, it impresses audible sounds on the ears of viewers. To those in meditation before the skull, they feel all this and they also feel physical pressures on their faces and bodies. When a sensitive person places his hands near the skull, distinct feelings of vibrations and energy are felt and the senses of both heat and cold depending on where the hands are held.
>
> As far as sight is concerned, the skull seems to be constantly in a state of flux, exhibiting changes of mood, clarity and color. The front part of the skull has been observed to turn cloudy like soft cotton candy. The very center of the skull sometimes turns so absolutely clear it seems to disappear into a vast void. The skull itself in total has changed in color from clear crystal to shades of green, violet, purple, amber, red, blue, etc. The visual study of the skull has strong tendencies to exert hypnotic effects on the majority of viewers. On at least one occasion, the skull developed a radiating aura that was in existence and very evident for at least a time of six minutes, allowing not lengthy, but quite accurate studies of its appearance.
>
> Numerous sounds have been heard by many observers; the most usual sounds so far, have been rhythmic tinkling of high-pitched chimes or

bells and a polyphonia-like chorus of what sounds to be many soft human voices. There have been unexplained thumps, cracking and snapping noises and various other sounds which may or may not have any relation at all to the presence of the skull.

Touch or physical feel or sensation, not necessarily in the fingertips as very few individuals have ever been allowed to go so far as the actual fingertip exploration of the skull. Most sensations have been reported as the pulling of the eyes or a sensation in the back of the eye sockets, a tightness through the chest area, a tightening of the arm and leg muscles or tendons. Observations have shown that these feelings have frequently been accompanied by an accelerated pulse and rise in blood pressure usually noticeable in pulsing at both sides of the throat. On occasions, there has been a most distinctive and elusive perfume or odor, with a velvety smooth heavy earth-type muskiness with a high accent note that is both bitter and acid. Taste, the last of the five senses, has not been in particular evidence so far.

Probably the most important thing the skull did while it was in my care was to show me that most living things and many material things are surrounded by a halo or aura or whatever you want to call it.[2]

One of the unusual things that Hewlett-Packard reportedly discovered about the Mitchell-Hedges skull was that the crystal always remained at a constant physical temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit, even when the room was a different temperature.

Dorland is of the opinion that what is happening in all this is that the crystal stimulates an unknown part of the brain, opening a psychic door to the absolute. He also came to the opinion that periodic happenings in the crystal skull were due to the positions of the sun, moon and planets in the sky.

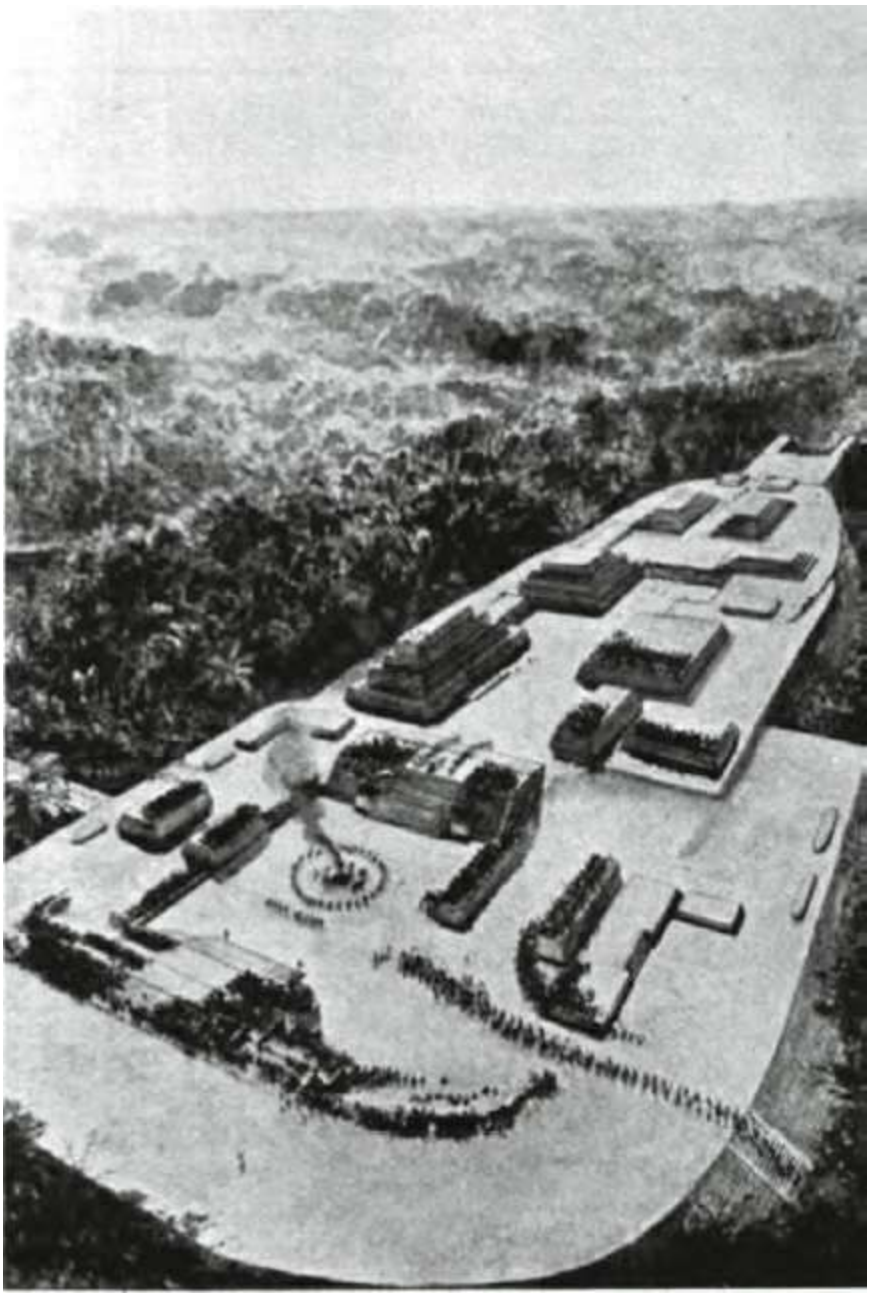
Says Dorland in his book *Holy Ice*,[15] "Crystals continuously put out electric-like radio waves. Since the brain does the same thing, they naturally interact."

A few days after the Hewlett-Packard tests, Anna Mitchell-Hedges took the skull from Dorland and took a bus to Ontario, where she lived off and on for the next thirty years. The skull resided there with her in Kitchener, Ontario, and then later in England for a few years. She returned to Canada for a time, then lived her final years in Indiana with her friend Bill Homan. She passed on at the age 100 in 2007. The Mitchell-Hedges skull was willed to

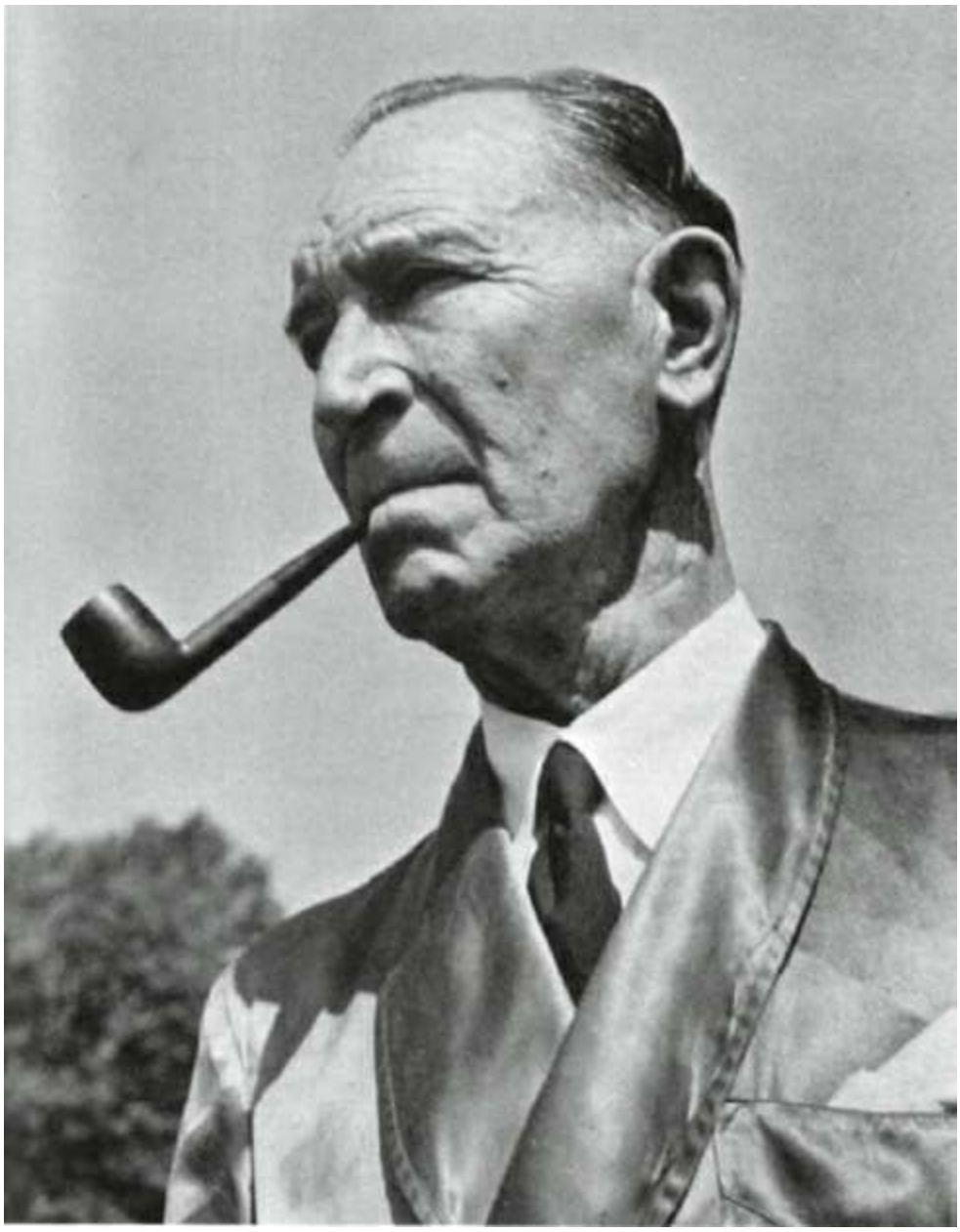
Homan.

So, there appears no doubt that the Mitchell-Hedges skull is capable of producing some quite remarkable effects, but is it genuinely ancient? Many doubt that it is, though Dorland tended to believe that it was.

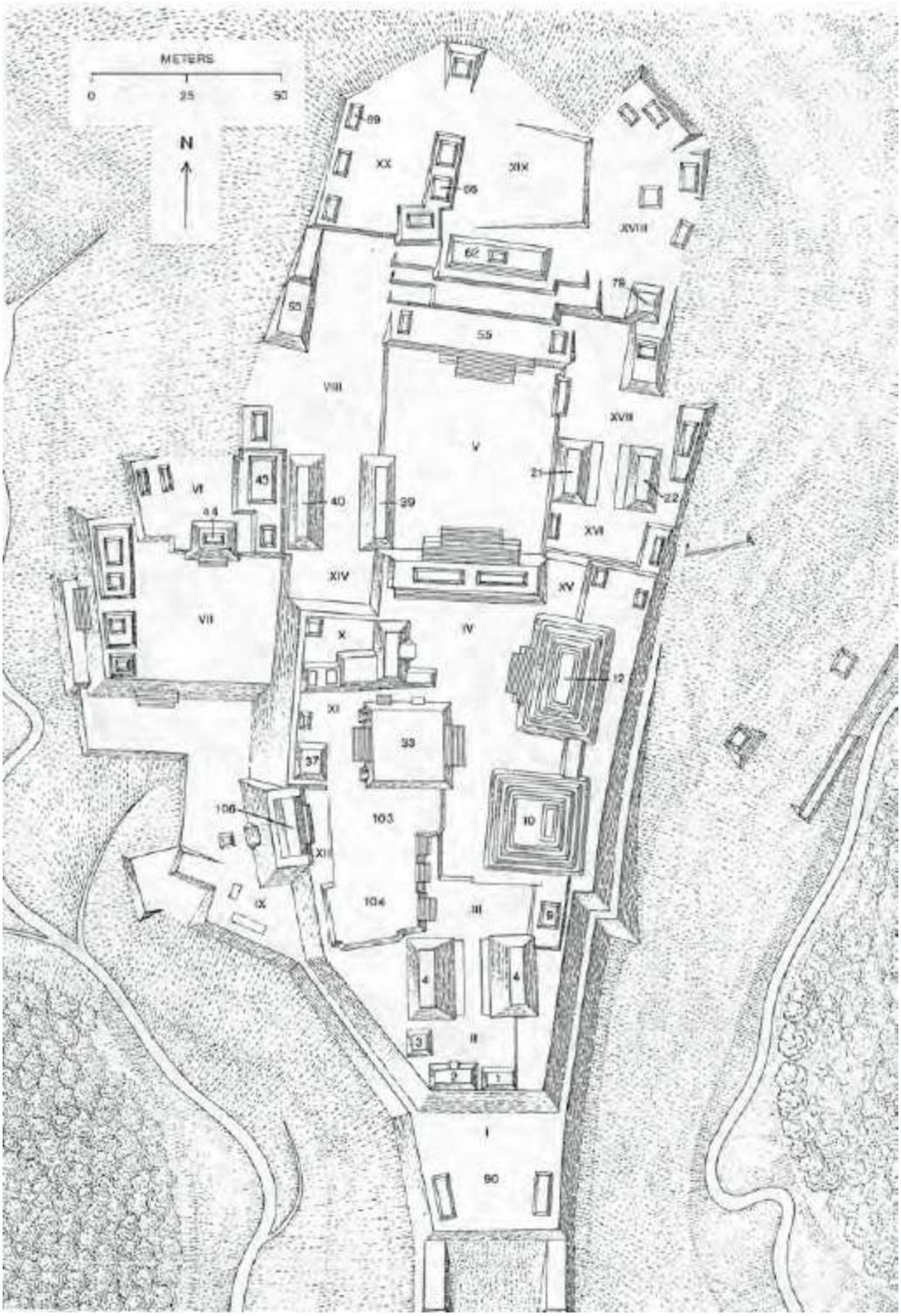
The mystery shrouding the origins of this skull only to adds to its mystique, in my opinion. Was Mitchell-Hedges a secret agent on assignment to Central America for the better part of his life? Did he somehow acquire the skull while in Central America during the off and on years of 1913 to 1934, the year *Blue Blaze* was published? Mitchell-Hedges hinted that he had gotten the skull as a part of a secret Aztec treasure from a lost city. Sibley Morrill believed he had obtained it from Pancho Villa while with Ambrose Bierce. My co-author, Stephen Mehler, believes that Mitchell-Hedges did not acquire the skull until he bought it from Sidney Burney in London in 1944. More on that view in an upcoming chapter by Stephen Mehler.



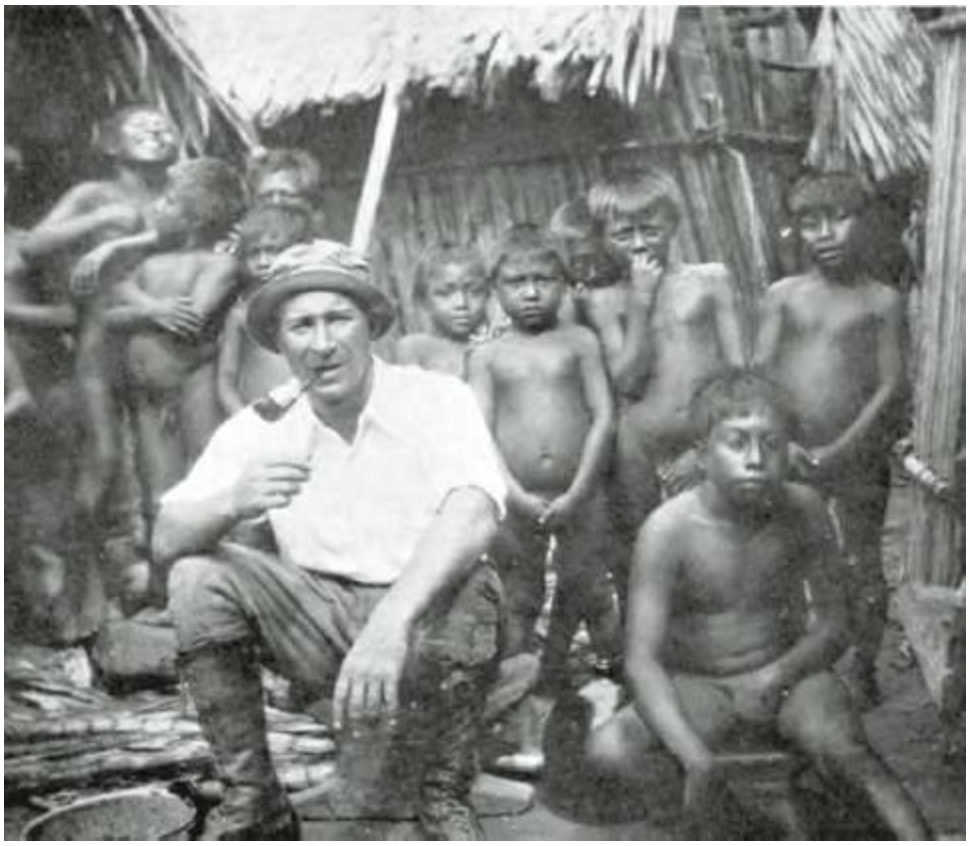
A drawing of a reconstructed of Lubaantun in Belize that appeared in the *Illustrated London News*.



F. A. ‘Mike’ Mitchell-Hedges, circa 1954.



Map of Lubaantun.



Top: Mike Mitchell-Hedges with Chucunaque children, circa 1928. Bottom: Lady Richmond Brown with their cook and bodyguard, Griffiths, circa 1922.

Top: The main staircase at Lubaantun after clearing, 1924. Bottom: Lady Brown and Mitchell-Hedges in Guatemala with Quiché Mayan “sacrificial stone,” circa 1927.

Lady Richmond Brown in this studio portrait from circa 1920.

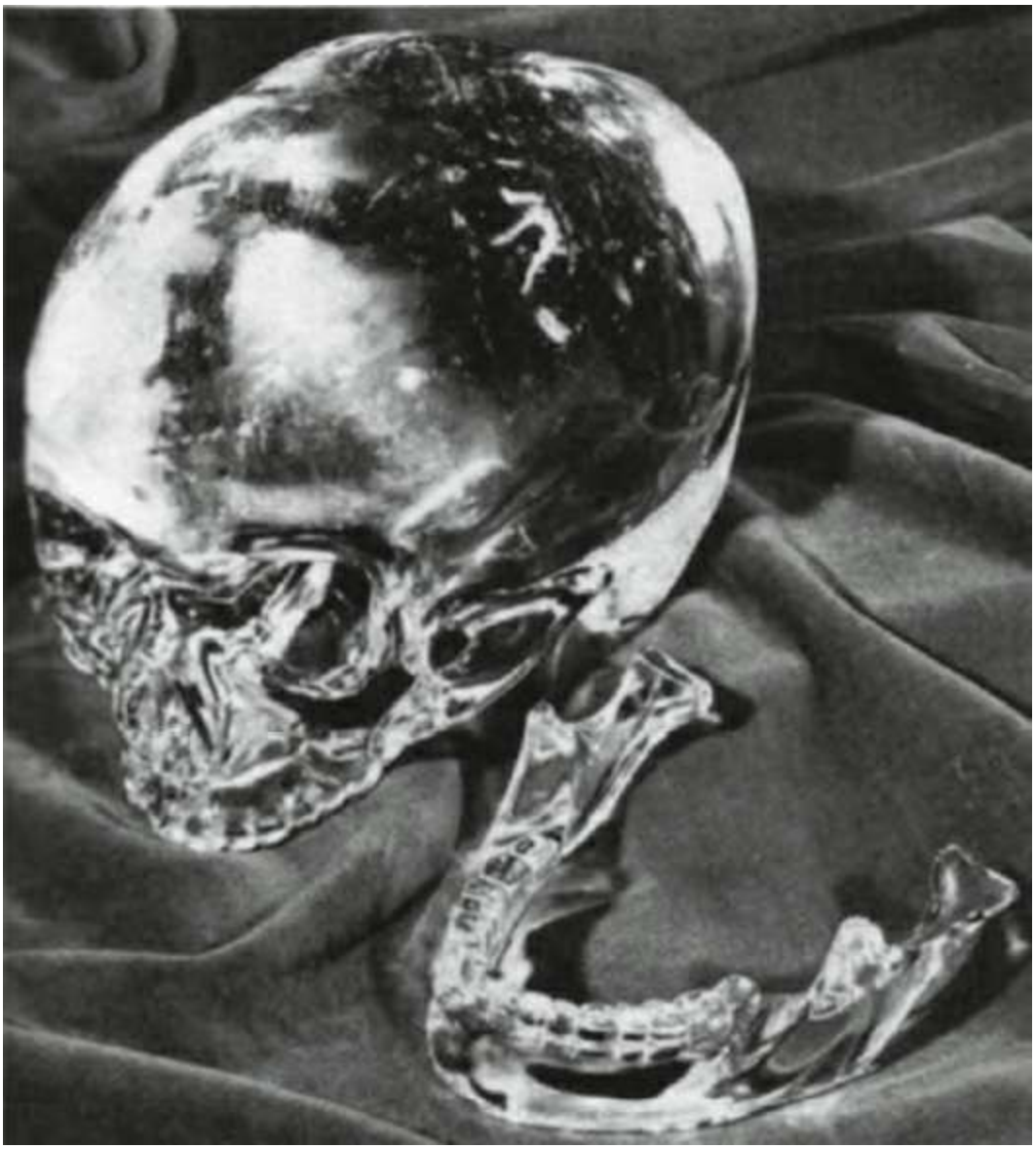
Lady Richmond Brown with a pistol in this portrait from circa 1923.

Jane Harvey Houlson with a rifle in this portrait for her 1934 book.

Lady Richmond Brown with Batanecos women, circa 1928.

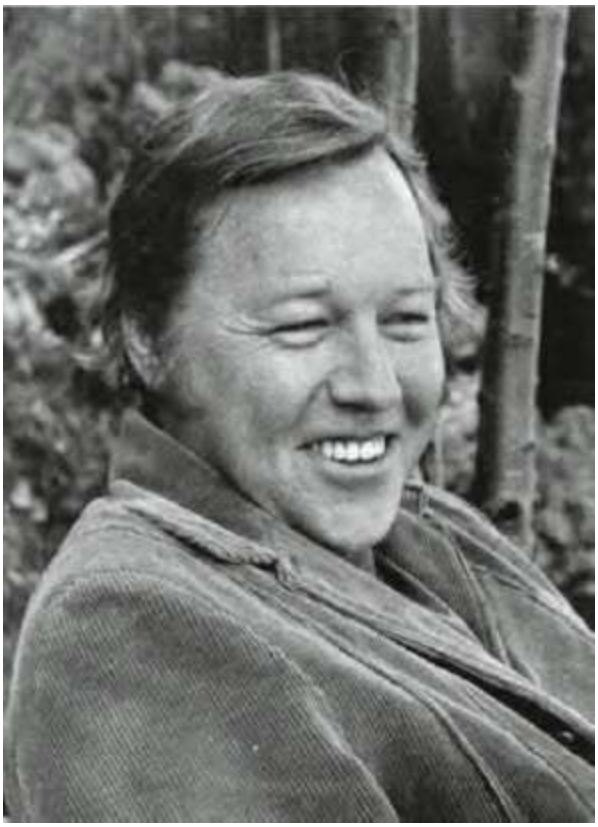
The bizarre fetish with caption that Lady Brown included in her book, *Unknown Tribes, Uncharted Seas* (1924).

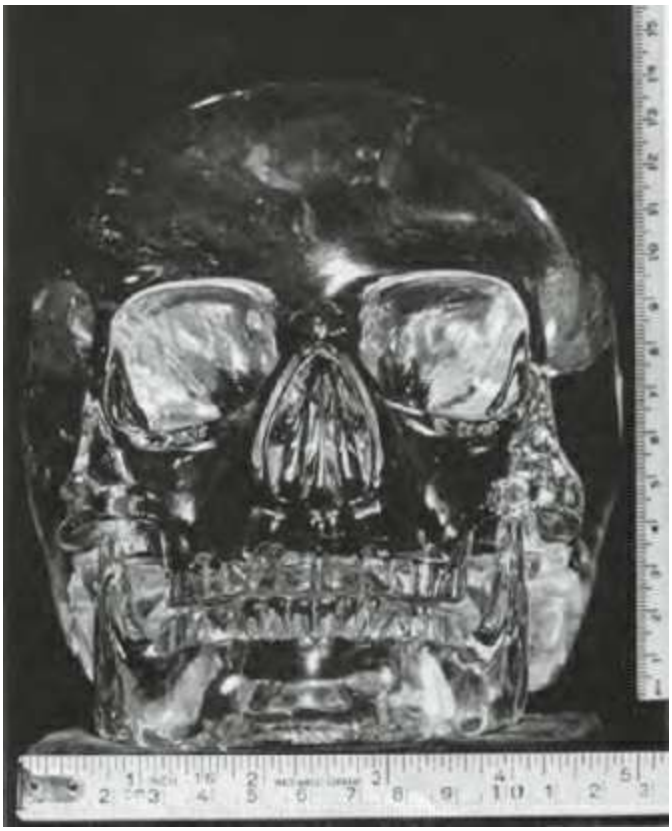
Frank Dorland working in his art restoration studio, circa 1969.



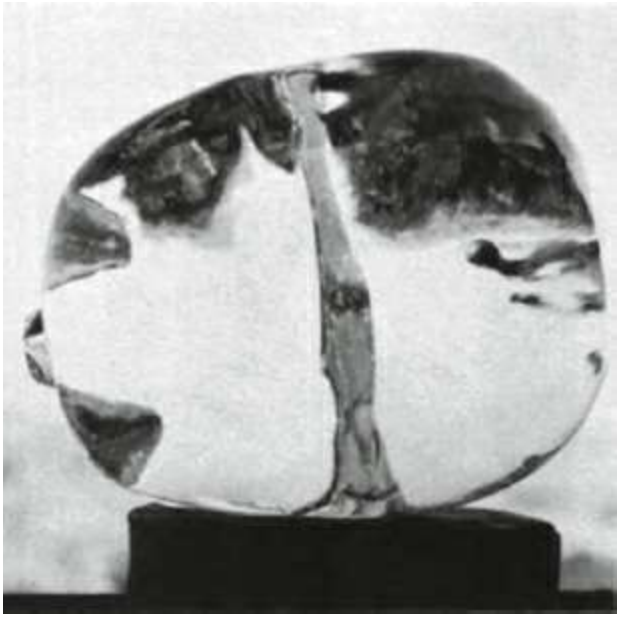
Top: The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull with the lower jaw removed. Photo by Frank Dorland.

Above: The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull, side view. Bottom: Richard Garvin, author of the 1973 book *The Crystal Skull*, which brought the attention of the world to the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull.





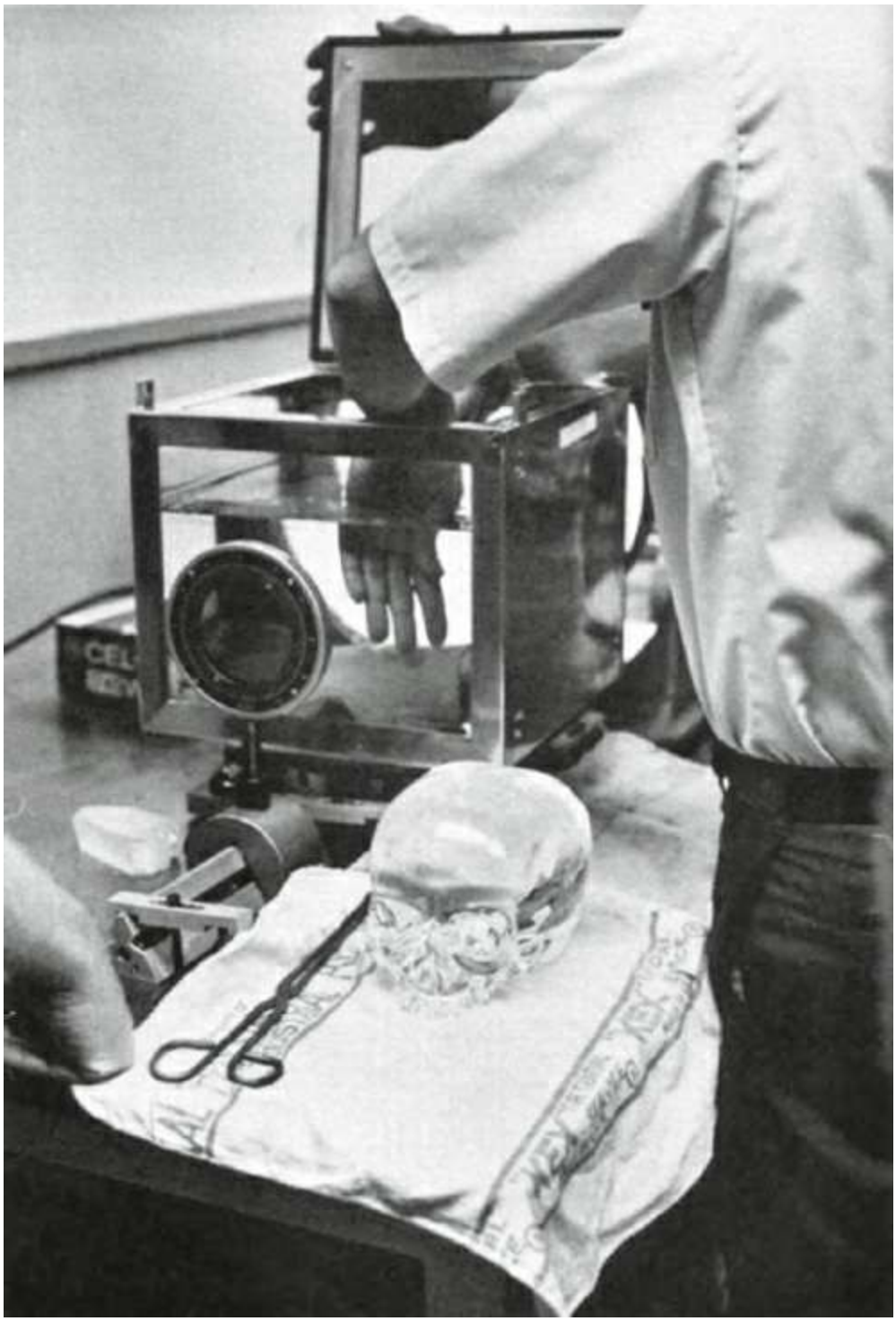
The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull front view.



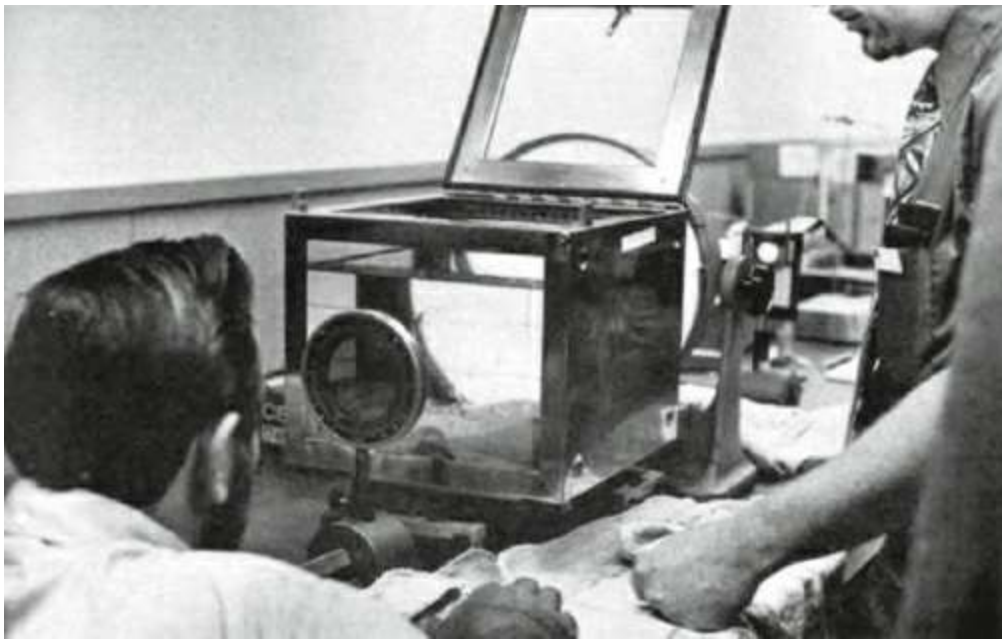
The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull showing the top of the cranium where one can see the reflection of the ribbon prism carved into the base of the skull which acts as a magnifer.

One of the “scenes” inside the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull photographed by Frank Dorland. This one is of the Caracol observatory (circled) at the Mayan-Toltec city of Chichen Itza.

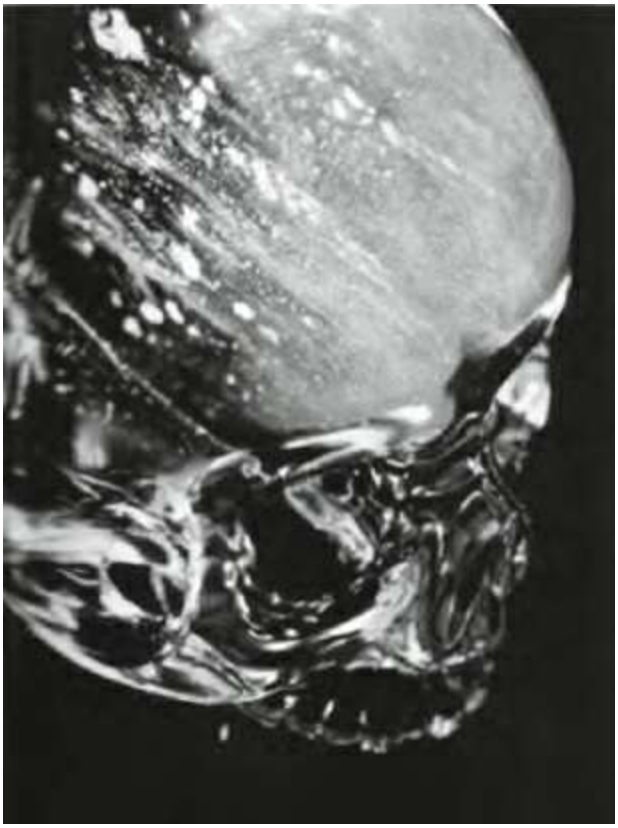
Anna “Sammy” Mitchell-Hedges signing an autograph, circa 1970.



The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull in the Hewlett-Packard Company laboratories just prior to its testing with polarized light in 1970.

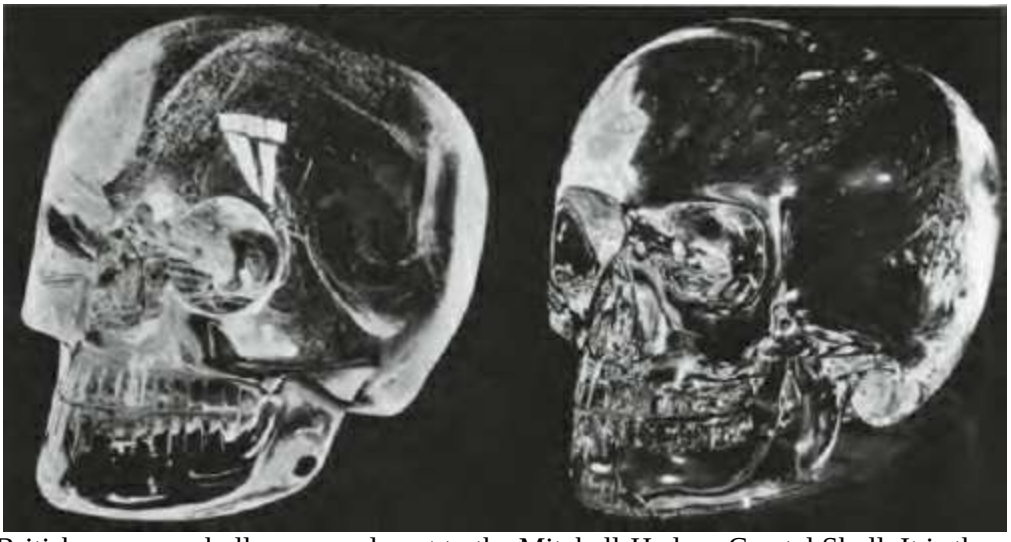


The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull being tested with polarized light in the Hewlett-Packard Company laboratories, 1970.



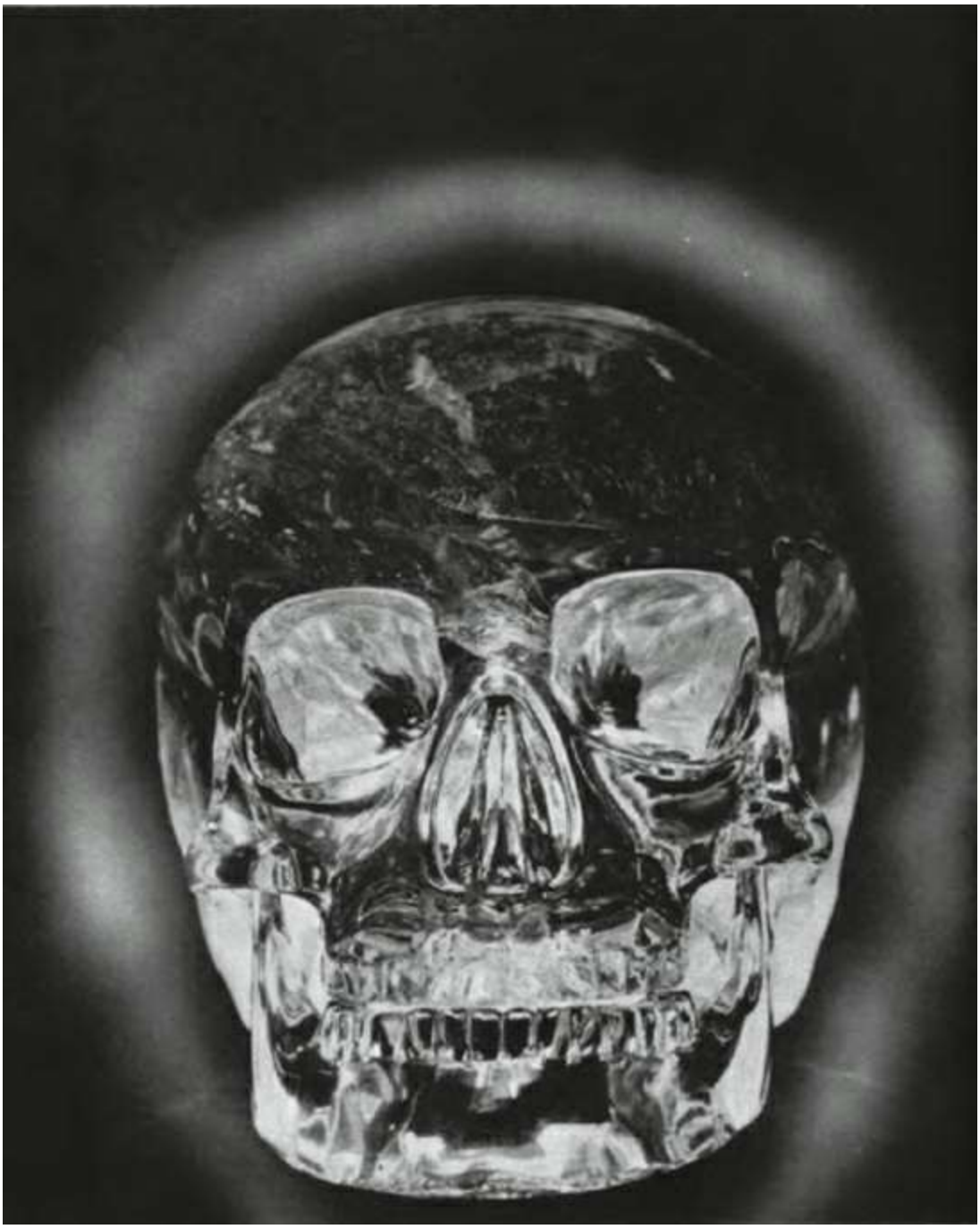
The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull showing the light pipes inside the skull that were discovered at the labs.

Cross section of the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull cast in epoxy to display the exact symmetry of the orbital excavations. Note the cylindical protrusions into the base of the cranium.



The British museum skull compared next to the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. It is thought that they may be “twins.”

Cross section of the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull cast in epoxy to display the exact symmetry of the orbital excavations.



TheMitchell-HedgesCrystalSkullwithasimulatedauraasphotographed by Frank Dorland.

PART TWO:

By Stephen S. Mehler

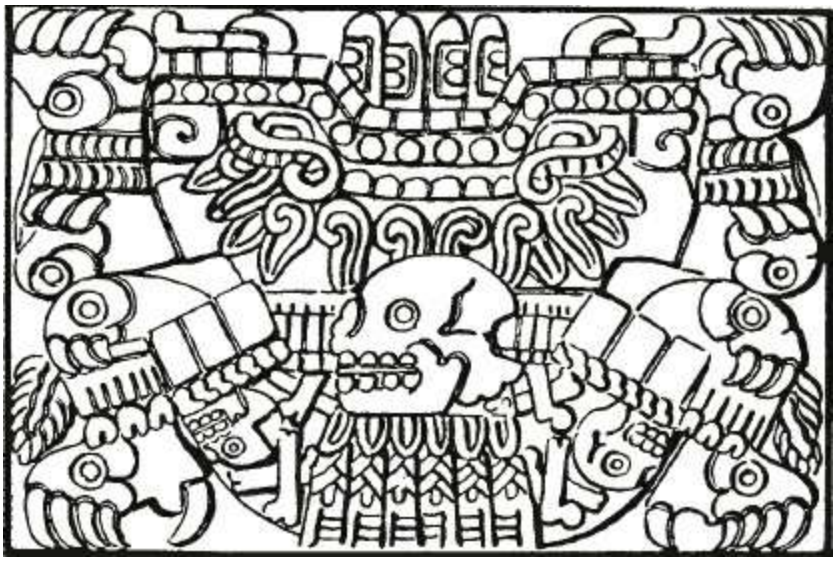


Fig. 1-Young Frank Nocerino, Brooklyn, New York. Photo courtesy of the Nocerino family. 1933.

Chapter 5

F.R. ‘Nick’ Nocerino: Dean of Crystal Skull Researchers

If we knew what it was we were doing,
it would not be called research, would it?
—Albert Einstein

F.R. ‘Nick’ Nocerino (1926-2004): That name should be known and acknowledged by anyone who has done any serious research about crystals and crystal skulls. Yet, it is amazing that in the many books written about crystal skulls, some just within the last few years, or on the many websites that discuss the subject, his name and work is given “short shrift” or not even mentioned at all.

This chapter will not do complete justice to the life and work of a remarkable man. The definitive biography of Nick Nocerino has yet to be written and it will be a fascinating and dynamic story when told. But, as it was my great fortune to have known and worked with Nick on and off from 1983 to 2004, and to have learned so much from him about crystals in general and crystal skulls in particular, it would be incredibly remiss on my part to write about crystal skulls without at least one chapter dedicated to his memory.

Nick Nocerino was born October 30, 1926 in Brooklyn, New York. As I was also born in Brooklyn, this was a connection and understanding that we always shared. I have often stated that New Yorkers have always considered themselves to be unique and separate from the rest of the US. People born in Brooklyn consider themselves unique and separate from the rest of New York, let alone the rest of the country! Nick was born into an Italian-American family under a veneer of Roman Catholicism. But his maternal grandmother was deeply involved in the ancient metaphysical tradition of Wicca, and this had a tremendous influence in his life. Born extremely sensitive to all vibrations, “psychic” in the common parlance, Nick was able

to “see” and feel other dimensions beyond the physical and had an early ability to commune with spirit. He naturally assumed, until he was a young adult, that all people had the extraordinary abilities that he had. When he was born (on the kitchen table in his family home with his Wiccan grandmother and others in her coven acting as midwives, as the family tells the story) his grandmother did not discard the birth placenta, but according to Wiccan tradition, gave it to a companion who placed some small quartz crystals with it. When he was about seven years old (see Figure 1), Nick went to the house of this woman, who was referred to as “Co-madre” a term of respect and praise for a *Strega* or *Stregone*, a Wiccan high priestess. She told Nick that he was “special” and had abilities to teach and help many people. She also taught Nick all about crystals and gave Nick the crystals that had been with his placenta to wear around his neck for protection. These “birth crystals” were his introduction at a young age to the wonder of crystals and began his lifelong interest in them. Nick also spoke of a woman he only knew as “Mrs. Parker,” also a member of his grandmother’s coven. Mrs. Parker helped young Nick with his reading skills but also taught him much about the use of quartz crystal. She used crystals to perform a successful healing on Nick for an enlarged spleen, where doctors could do little, and taught him to use crystals for healing.

Fig. 2-Frank Nocerino (left) with his brother Vinny, Brooklyn, New York. Photo courtesy of the Nocerino family. 1937.

A profound incident occurred in Nick's life when he was about nine years old (see Figure 2) that relates to the subject matter of this book. Walking up the stairs to the upper floor in his Brooklyn home, Nick "saw" a strange apparition in front of him. A skull appeared before him in a mirror and he immediately perceived that it was a crystal skull, not a human one. He saw a snake come out of one eye, then another! Then he saw a jaguar come out of the right eye (see Figure 3). He was amazed to see all this but because of his Wiccan understanding was neither frightened nor shocked by the incident.

But he also never forgot it!

Nick enlisted in the Navy during World War II at the tender age of seventeen. It was on board a ship being deployed to Europe that he acquired the nickname of “Nick” which he would use the rest of his life. His superior aboard ship was dismayed to learn there were several “Franks” in the group, including Frank Nocerino. Wanting to be able to distinguish between all of them, the man used some keys for the men. Learning that Frank Nocerino had a Greek girlfriend, he nicknamed him, “Nick the Greek.” The name stuck and Frank Nocerino became Nick for evermore.

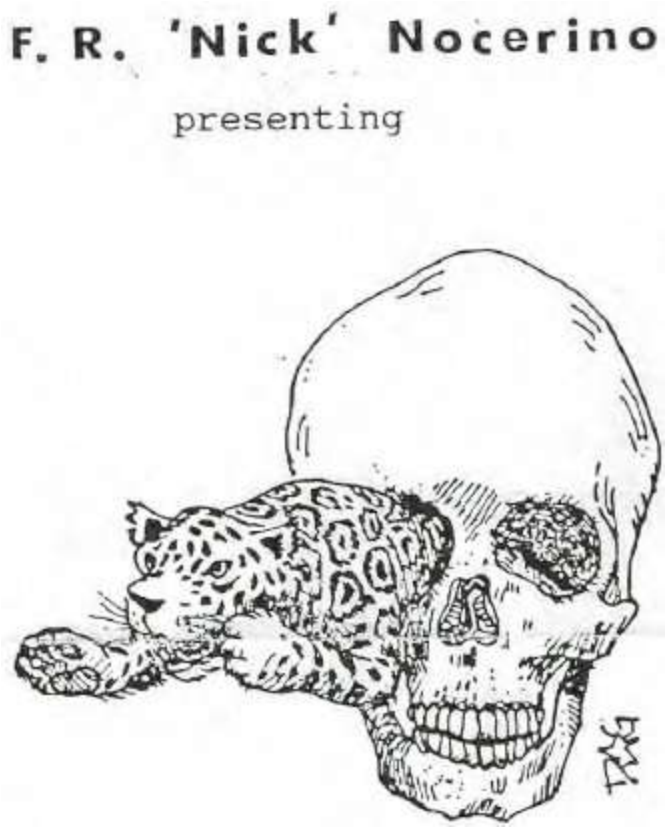


Fig. 3-Drawing of Nick Nocerino’s vision. Courtesy of the Nocerino family.

In 1944, two important events occurred in Nick’s life. After landing in France soon after D-Day, Nick and his mates made their way to the south of France. Finding themselves near the town of Carcassonne in the area known as the Languedoc—once the hotbed of Cathar resistance against the Roman Catholic Church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD, and an area of importance to the Knights Templar—they paused to rest at a farm. Stopping at a well near the farmhouse to draw water to wash up, Nick removed his shirt and his birth crystals from around his neck. When the French farmer who owned the place saw Nick’s crystals, he became quite excited and

animated and began speaking loudly to Nick in French. Through a translator, Nick calmly answered the questions put to him by the French farmer. The man then ran off and quickly returned with a bundle that he had kept well hidden and gave it to Nick. Nick unwrapped the bundle and saw an adult-sized cloudy quartz crystal skull. His companions were amazed but because of the early vision he had, Nick was neither surprised nor shocked to see his first actual crystal skull. The farmer then explained that he had been waiting for some "couriers" to take the skull out of France and wanted Nick to do this service. Realizing he was in the middle of a war and trusting his intuition, Nick politely refused the Frenchman's offer of the skull. Nick later learned this skull had been called "The Blood of Christ" and had been protected from falling into the hands of the Gestapo by a secret society that had been waiting for the right persons to remove it from France. Nick referred to this crystal skull as "The Templar Skull," because he had seen visions of the Knights Templar in it.

Around August of 1944, the ship YMS-13 that Nick was on was accidentally sunk by the French Navy. Nick survived but lost his birth crystals in the incident. He also would have certainly lost the crystal skull if he had taken it—one of many times Nick's great intuition served him well. Nick told me in 2001 that he went back to France in later years searching for that crystal skull, but in vain. He believed the skull was hidden in a vault in a river bank in the south of France where it still may be today.

After getting out of the service, Nick began his career as a teacher and researcher into all things metaphysical and paranormal—and pursued his interest in crystal skulls in earnest. He founded the "Society of Crystal Skulls, International" in New York City in late 1944 and again incorporated in California in early 1945. This organization was, until its disbanding in 2004, the oldest and most reputable group devoted to researching and testing ancient crystal skulls in the world. Nick gathered many students to him, and crystal skulls began to appear all over—as he often said over the years, "Crystal skulls come to me, I don't go after them!"

In search of more information about crystal skulls, Nick travelled extensively to Mexico and Central America in the late 40s and many skulls came his way. Nick once estimated he saw almost 450 different skulls made of various crystals and stones during this period—most the size of a tennis ball or a baseball. However in 1949, Nick was able to see and hear about a few genuine ancient crystal skulls. One memorable skull was carried in a leather pouch around the neck of a Mayan shaman in Guatemala, near Honduras. This shaman was very well respected by the people and had appeared, Nick said, almost out of nowhere. The pouch contained a large, adult human-sized clear rose quartz skull, with a detachable jaw just like the famous Mitchell-Hedges Skull. Nick estimated the Rose Quartz Crystal Skull weighed about twelve to fourteen pounds, and later said that it was larger than the Hedges skull. Nick was unable to take any pictures of this skull in 1949 and he searched for it in vain for many years thereafter. He said he felt it was kept in an obsidian box and he was therefore unable to track it physically. In 2002 he felt it was “on the move” somewhere in Guatemala. Nick told me before he passed away that he felt that this Rose Quartz Crystal Skull was the true “Master Skull” or at least one of them, and the most powerful he had ever experienced.

Nick married and settled with his family in Northern California in the late ‘40s and began teaching there in the 1950s. He was awarded the first credential to teach Parapsychology issued by the California State Board of Education in the early ‘50s and began lecturing at colleges and universities and teaching privately, which he continued throughout the rest of his life (see Figure 4). In the ‘60s and ‘70s, interest in crystal skulls began to increase, and many people contacted Nick about skulls they had and wanted him to “authenticate” them. The overwhelming majority of these skulls were modern-carved, but Nick told me he probably saw fifteen to eighteen crystal skulls that he could have classified as ancient artifacts if extensive testing could have been done.

Fig. 4-Nick Nocerino and students. Photo courtesy of the Nocerino family. 1970s.

Nick had heard about the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull in the late ‘40s, probably hearing Mitchell-Hedges himself on BBC Radio extolling its mysteries. In the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, he learned the skull was in the hands of art restorer Frank Dorland in Marin County, California. Nick was able to briefly see the skull at this time and was very impressed with it—it was exquisitely carved out of clear optical-grade quartz crystal with a detachable jaw, as was the Rose Quartz Skull he had already seen. In 1985, Nick organized and led a research team to the home of Anna Mitchell-Hedges, the adopted daughter of F.A. Mitchell-Hedges, who had inherited the skull upon his death in 1959. At the time, she lived in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. The team spent over two weeks extensively testing and studying the skull (see Figure 5). Nocerino’s conclusions then, and his final thoughts on this skull, will be presented later.

Fig. 5-Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. Photo by Norman J. Benzie. 1986.

In the 1960s, a man named Richard Shafsky came to work with and study under Nick Nocerino. After first seeing the Mitchell-Hedges Skull, Nick decided there should be another trip to Mexico by his group to attempt to locate the other ancient skulls he had been told about by Mayan shamans in 1949. In the early 1970s, Richard was sent to Mexico on a "fact-finding" mission. Nick gave Richard specific instructions as to what to say and where to go on this mission, specifically to the Oaxaca area of Mexico. Richard was told by Nick to say he was seeking "The Order of The Jaguar" to any Mayan priests and shamans he might meet. This was from Nick's boyhood vision. Richard eventually met a man named Francisco Reyes, who claimed to be a Mayan priest in the Order of The Jaguar and who befriended Richard. Richard learned that Francisco and his group were called "Mentalistas" by the Mexican authorities—"mentalists" were people who used their intuitive abilities to find Mayan and Olmec tombs and sell the contents on the black market. Francisco admitted to this, but claimed he was responsible for feeding and caring for many Mayan villages and the people were very poor and near starving.

In the mid '70s, Richard met a man in Mexico named John Zamora from

San Jose, California, who was working as an agent with Mexican and American businessmen in several ventures. Zamora became friends with Francisco and his group, and agreed to try to help the Mayans sell their goods to Americans. Richard learned that Francisco and his group had found several crystal skulls, along with Olmec, Mayan and Aztec carved jade artifacts.

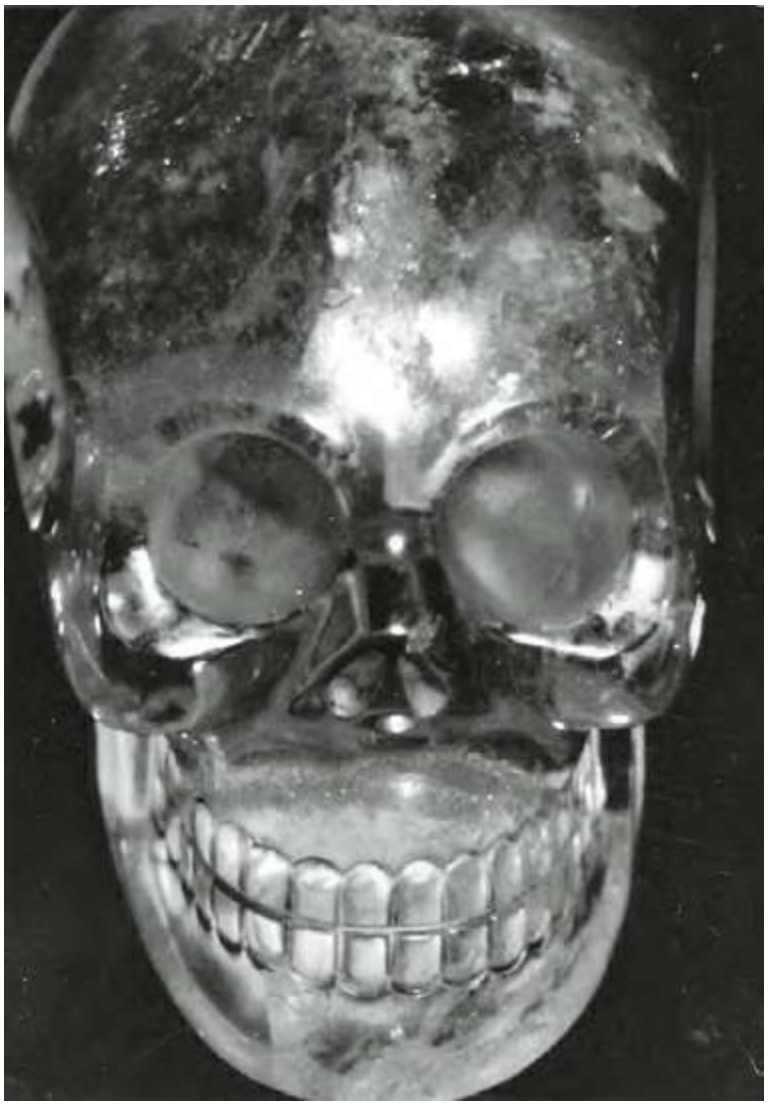


Fig. 6-Mayan Crystal Skull. Society of Crystal Skulls, International. Photo by Susan Emigh. 1980.

Fig. 7-Amethyst Crystal Skull. Photo by Francoise Beaudoin. 1983.

In 1979, Richard contacted Nick about a specific crystal skull that Francisco had. Nick went to Mexico and met with Francisco and immediately realized the crystal skull he had was one that Nick had been told about in 1949. He had been told about several crystal skulls with particular “indentations” on the sides, and this was one of them! After several meetings with Francisco and his group, Nick returned to the US. The skull appeared in California in October 1979, after Nick had paid all the expenses involved, and was given to Nick and his group for study and research. After three months of extensive research, Nick named the skull “The Mayan Crystal Skull” because he and his students had seen many scenes of the Maya and Mayan ceremonies in the skull (see Figure 6). This same priest, Francisco Reyes, brought another crystal skull to the US in November 1982. This skull,

which we labeled “The Amethyst Crystal Skull,” was introduced to me first and then I arranged for Nick Nocerino to see and work with it at the house of John Zamora in San Jose, California in April, 1983 (see Figure 7). Nick had only a few hours with this skull, but I was able to observe him work for the first time and learn much from him. He only shared a small portion of what he received from this skull with me and this will be presented in the chapter on Crystal Skull Research.

Throughout the 1980s, ‘90s and early 2000s, Nick presented many lectures, workshops and seminars on crystals and crystal skulls. In the early 1980s, Nick presented the first public lectures on his work with the Mayan Skull (see Figure 8), the first public lectures concerning actual research on crystal skulls presented by anyone in the world! He appeared on many national and local television shows, was interviewed on radio programs and was featured in several videos on crystal skulls. Many of Nick’s students went on to write books themselves, earning Nick the title “Teacher of Teachers.” Nick worked with many archaeologists, crystallographers, crystal and stone carvers, engineers, doctors and computer scientists through the Society of Crystal Skulls, International. It was Nick Nocerino who established a scientific laboratory approach to test, study and authenticate ancient crystal skulls, and he created the high standards that researchers like myself utilize today. Working with the Mayan Crystal Skull and the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull in the 1980s, Nick and his research team created the tripartite system of classification of crystal skulls that we all use today: *contemporary*, *old* and *ancient*. A contemporary crystal skull is one that has been carved into a skull in the last 100 years, particularly in the last fifty years when literally thousands of skulls of all sizes have been produced. An old crystal skull would be one carved into a skull from over 100 years ago to a few hundred years ago. Many of the crystal skulls out there that have been claimed to be ancient by their owners (or by dubious researchers or sources with little or no scientific background in antiquities) are actually old or even contemporary. Finally, a crystal skull classified as genuinely ancient would have been carved as a skull over a thousand years ago. As noted above, Nick reported to me in 2001 that he had seen perhaps as many as eighteen skulls that he would classify as ancient, but he could only be definite about nine or

ten that he had tested.

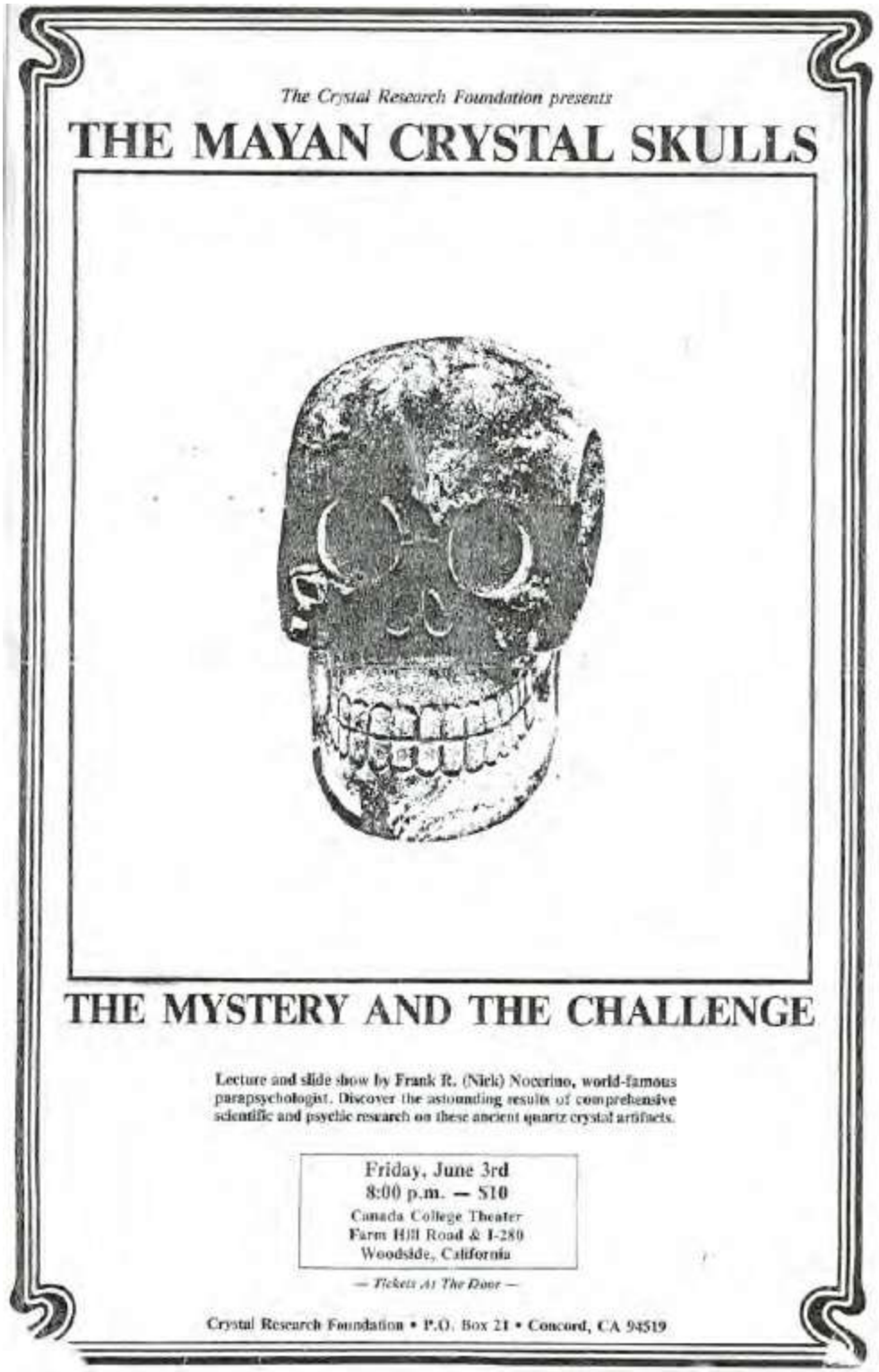

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Fig. 8-Flyer of lecture by Nick Nocerino. Courtesy of the Nocerino family.

After appearing on many television and radio programs in the 1980s and

‘90s, Nick got involved in the production of several videos about his crystal skull research. Some of these were *Journey into the Crystal Skulls* (Crystal Skulls Society, 1987), *Crystal Skulls* (1992) and *Skull Trek: The Journey of the Crystal Skulls* (Pelton Productions, 1995). Nick was also co-author of the book *Mysteries of the Crystal Skulls Revealed* (J&S Aquarian Networking, 1988). In this book, Nick presented his most complete—up to then—information publicly.

In the 1990s, Nick remained very active in crystal skull research. He advised on an archaeological excavation in central Mexico in 1995, using his great ability to “see” where to dig. He instructed the archaeologists where would be the best places to find caches and they were able to uncover many artifacts. Several crystal skulls, in particular, were found on this excavation. Nick obtained one of these skulls, a clear-cloudy full sized quartz crystal skull that he named “Sha-Na-Ra” after a personal healer that he had (see Figure 9). Nick classified this skull as an ancient crystal skull after testing and working with it.

In 1998, Dr. Chet Snow put on the first of his Crystal Healing conferences in Sedona, Arizona. Nick was on the program lecturing about crystal skulls with Sha-Na-Ra. Also on the program was JoAnn Parks with Max, the Texas Crystal Skull (see separate Chapter on Max). This was the first time that two ancient crystal skulls had appeared together and the conference was a great success. Nick was again on the program and lectured at the third Crystal Healing Conference held in Sedona in 2001. JoAnn Parks and Max were again on the program, and I was honored to also be a presenter. It was the only time I was ever on a program with Nick and I was very pleased that he was in the audience when I presented my research on crystal skulls and ancient civilizations—the only time he ever heard me publicly lecture on the subject. This occasion was also the last public lecture that Nick Nocerino gave.

Nick became very ill after 2001and ceased public appearances. My wife and I spent some precious hours with him at his home in 2002 and I last spoke to him on the phone soon after that. Chet Snow had planned a fourth Crystal Healing Conference for 2003, changing the venue to the San Francisco Bay Area due to Nick’s health (see Figure 10), but it was cancelled and it was likely Nick could not have attended even if it had gone off. Nick passed away on May 23, 2004, and the world lost not only the pre-eminent investigator and researcher of crystal skulls, but one of the greatest teachers

of the twentieth century. Nick Nocerino was a truly unique man who wore many hats. He was an original “ghost-buster” called in to investigate hauntings and spirit interventions. In this regard, Nick appeared on many television shows, including the original “In Search Of” specials of the ‘70s, and the Johnny Carson show on NBC. Nick was a Master of the Wiccan Tradition, a teacher of all aspects of metaphysics, a gifted sensitive and healer, a guide to lost souls—both physical and non-physical, a loving husband and father, and a friend to many.

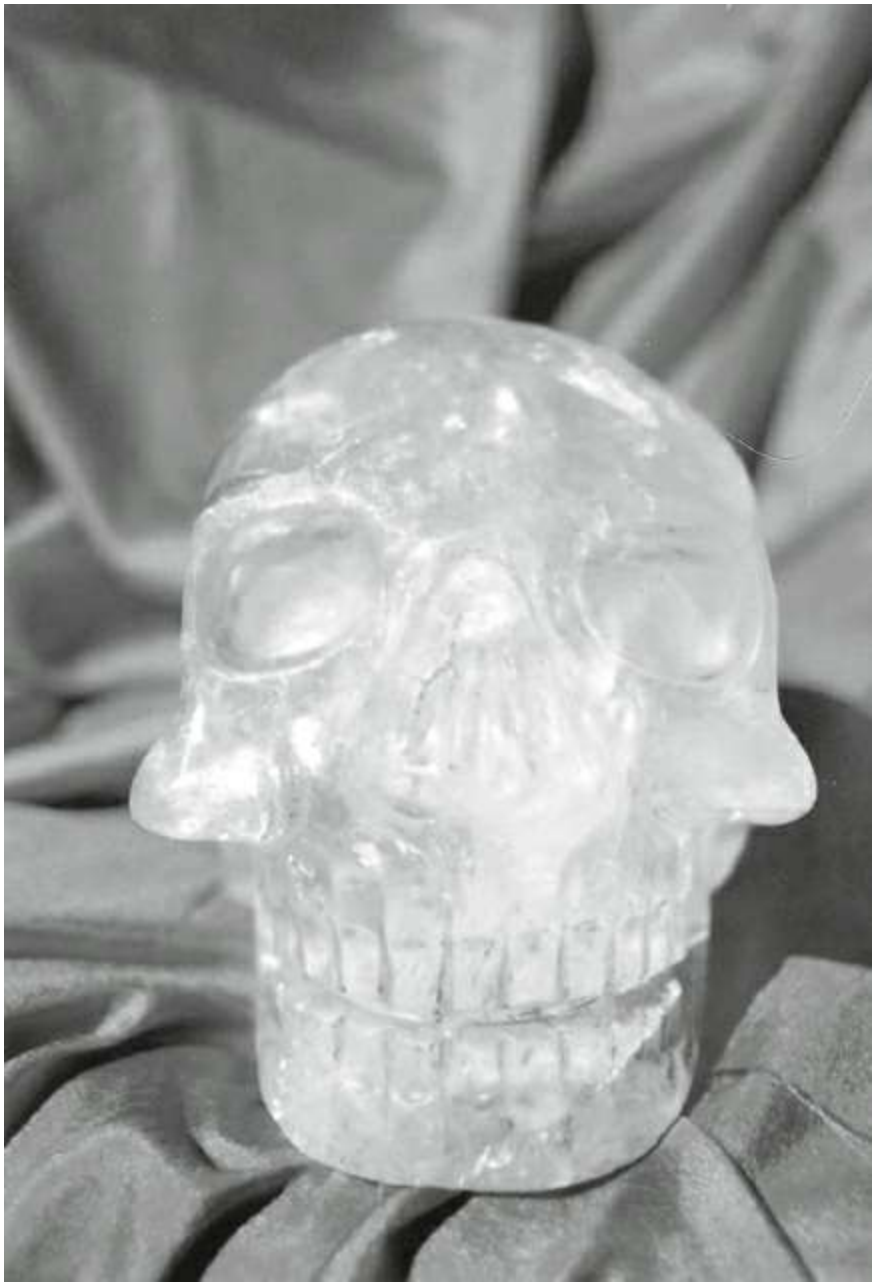

Fig. 9-Sha-Na-Ra, the Nocerino Crystal Skull. Photo by Charles Pelton. 1999.

Many hundreds of people crowded into a restaurant in Nick's town of San Pablo, California to attend a memorial service held for him in 2004. Many hundreds more sent condolences to his family and continue to do so today. Nick touched and influenced literally thousands of people— students, seekers, and those just curious and interested— during his lifetime, and he continues to be a major influence today.

I had profound conversations with Nick in 1999, 2001 and 2002 about his research and conclusions on crystal skulls. Nick often said, "The more I research crystal skulls, the less I know about them!" This represented his true humility as there has never been anyone who has come close to the years and hours he spent in this research. Nick's last conclusions will be presented for the first time to the general public in later chapters of this book. This book and all books concerning crystal skulls, whether his name is mentioned in them or not, stand as a testament and tribute to the life and work of Nick Nocerino (see Figure 11).

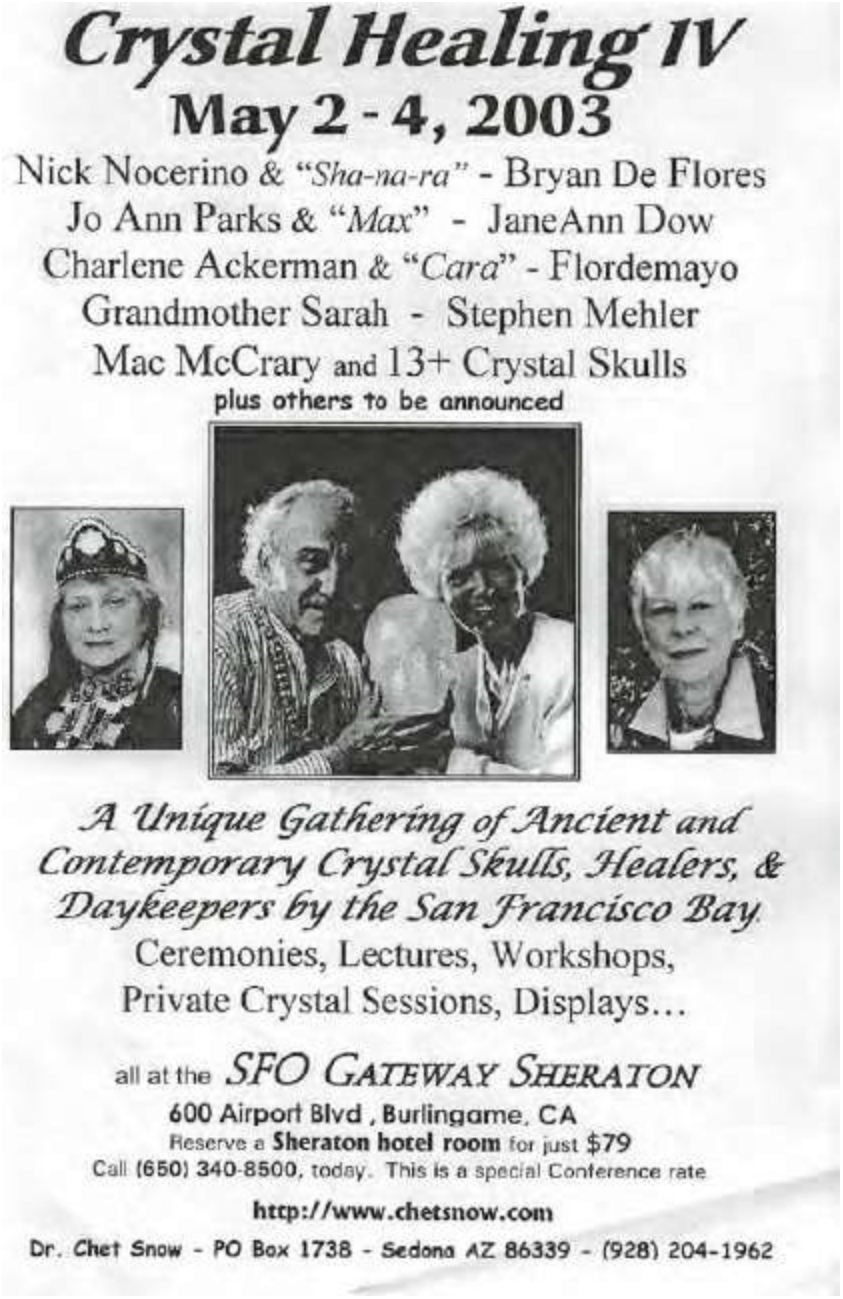
Crystal Healing IV
May 2 - 4, 2003
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Fig. 10-Flyer for Dr. Chet Snow's Crystal Healing Conference IV. 2003.

Fig. 11-Nick Nocerino. Photo courtesy of the Nocerino family. 2000.

Chapter 6

Other Crystal Skulls

I don't go after crystal skulls,
they come after me!
—Nick Nocerino

Most of the books published about crystal skulls, especially those written prior to 1987, only mention the famous Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull and perhaps a few others found in museums. There is a clear quartz adult-sized crystal skull in the British Museum in London. It was reportedly looted from a tomb in Mexico in the 1860s when the Austrian dictator Maximilian was in power and sold by a "soldier of fortune" to Tiffany's in New York in the 1880s. Tiffany's sold it to the British Museum in 1898. It was labeled "Aztec" by the first anthropologists who examined it, only because they believed the Aztec Empire was the only Mesoamerican civilization to carve skulls in crystal, but this is a limited understanding due to lack of data or comprehensive study of ancient civilizations and their technological abilities before the advent of writing. I have never seen or experienced the British Museum Skull in person. This skull is featured on the cover of the book *Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World* (Welfare & Fairley, 1980). There is also a small clear-cloudy quartz crystal skull in the Musee de L'Homme (now in the Trocadero Museum) in Paris that has also been labeled as Aztec. I have never seen this skull either.

We will discuss in this chapter several other crystal skulls that may be

ancient artifacts. There are literally hundreds of old skulls out in private hands, carved well over a hundred years ago, that many owners and other "researchers" have labeled as ancient. There are also literally thousands of contemporary skulls in private hands, most carved within the last fifty years that some dubious "experts" have also labeled as ancient. But to my knowledge, the only skulls that have been scientifically tested and studied are the ones I discuss in this and other chapters. As mentioned, Nick Nocerino and his students of the Society of Crystal Skulls, International set the standards and methods for testing and classifying crystal skulls. Nick Nocerino examined and tested hundreds of skulls in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, but found only a very few he thought might possibly be ancient. I have been fortunate to also examine, experience and test several of these skulls.

From 1978-1980, I was employed as a Staff Research Scientist for the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, in San Jose, California. In November 1979, the Curator of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose, Dale Jordan, was contacted by a man who wanted to exhibit an artifact in the Museum, if the Order was willing to "authenticate" the item. This man was the same John Zamora mentioned in the last chapter, acting as an agent for Mayan priest Francisco Reyes and his group in Mexico. Zamora sent some photographs to Jordan and they were brought to my attention for comment.

The photos were brought to me in the Research Department because I had a background in archaeology and prehistory and was considered the resident "authority" on antiquities for the Order. The photographs were of an adult-sized quartz crystal skull and I became very interested, as this was my first exposure to the phenomenon of crystal skulls. I contacted John Zamora and it was arranged for him to bring the skull into our laboratories for testing.

On January 4, 1980, John Zamora came to the Rosicrucian Research Laboratory with the crystal skull that had been labeled "The Mayan Crystal Skull" by Nick Nocerino.

This skull was made of a clear to cloudy quartz crystal, about four inches high and eight inches long, and weighed eight pounds, thirteen ounces. The skull was more stylized than anatomical and had two circular indentations on the sides (see Figure 1). John Zamora told us the skull had been found in a tomb in Guatemala, near the Mayan site of Copan, in 1912 by the Montano family and kept in families of Mayan shamans. The details of our research will be presented later. We also held two psychometry sessions that day; the first was with Dr. Marcel Vogel, a Rosicrucian who was a Senior Scientist with IBM and who professed over twenty-five years work (in 1980) with crystals and who had examined and worked with the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull and the British Museum Skull. I recorded the session with Vogel and he provided much information about crystals in general, and crystal skulls in particular. This information will be shared in the chapter on Crystal Skull Research. In the afternoon, we held a psychometry session with Michael Campbell, a self-professed Warlock who was on record as having been tested as a sensitive by several parapsychologists in New York City. This session was also very interesting and will be shared publicly for the first time in the research chapter.

Fig. 1-Mayan Crystal Skull. Photo by Susan Emigh. 1980.

John Zamora brought the Mayan Crystal Skull in to the Rosicrucian

Research Laboratory again in March 1980 for another whole day of testing and psychometry sessions. I was very pleased with the results and wrote two reports on our work for the Research Department. However, because the skull could not be dated scientifically, Dr. George F. Buletza, head of the Rosicrucian Research Department, would not allow us to continue our research or let the skull be displayed in the museum. Actually, it was pressure from other officers of the Order who were skeptical of our work that ended the research. I was able to take the skull home for a few days in March of 1980, and continued to test it there.

I became friendly with Zamora as he continued to use me as an "expert" to be contacted by anyone interested in buying the skull. During this time, I learned about Nick Nocerino and his work with the Mayan Crystal Skull in a magazine called *The Uni-Com Guide* published in April of 1980.

Fig. 2-Stephen Mehler with Amethyst Crystal Skull. Photo by Paul Rader. 1982.

I left the Rosicrucian Order Research Department in late 1980 but stayed in contact with John Zamora. He contacted me again in November of 1982 and told me the Mayan priest for whom he was an agent was in San Jose with another skull. I rushed to his house and met Francisco Reyes for the first time. He had another crystal skull, smaller than the Mayan Skull and made of amethyst (see Figure 2).

We called this skull the Amethyst Crystal Skull, not knowing at that time that Nick Nocerino had already seen and tested many different amethyst skulls. This skull was the size of a young adult's skull, about four inches high

and seven inches long, and weighed about eight and a half pounds. It was made of a mottled, dark purple amethyst. The skull had a distinct white suture line all around the skull which divided it in two, but it was made from one single cluster of amethyst (see Figure 3). This skull also had two circular indentations on the sides and seemed to be made by the same people or culture as the Mayan Skull. I was really attracted to this amethyst skull and it was given to me for a whole week to study and test.

I arranged many sessions with this skull and called in many Rosicrucian friends and others to examine it and do psychometry, all of which I recorded. The Amethyst Crystal Skull was examined by archaeologists, anthropologists, crystallographers, stone masons and carvers, lapidary artists, musicians and many other artists, machinists, and gifted sensitives. This research will be shared for the first time publicly in the research chapter. My own conclusions were that both the Mayan Crystal Skull and the Amethyst Crystal Skull were genuine ancient artifacts.

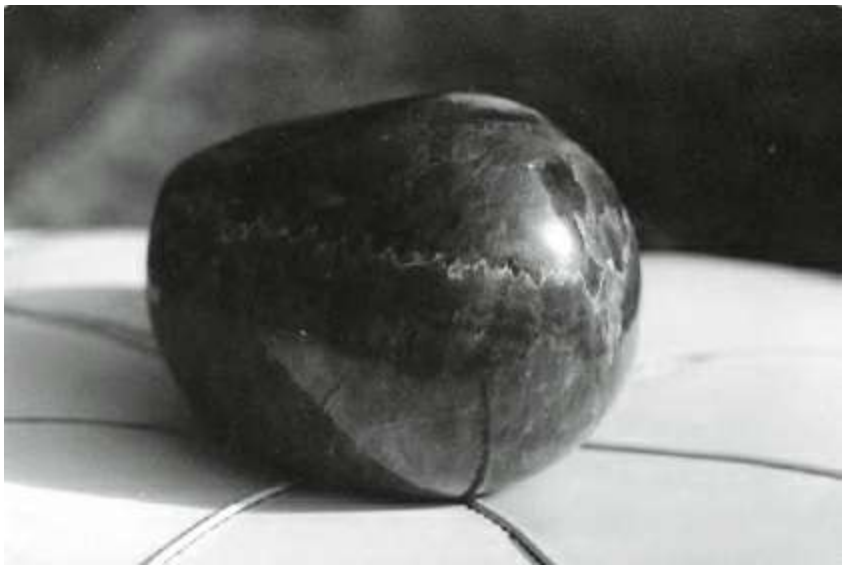


Fig.3-Amethyst Crystal Skull. Top showing suture line. Photo byFrancoise Beaudoin. 1983.

In late 1986, I was interviewed about my crystal skull research by one of Nick Nocerino's students, Sandra Bowen, and her partner for a book they were writing about crystal skulls. I only agreed to this interview because Nick Nocerino was also to be a co-author. This book was eventually published as *Mysteries of the Crystal Skulls Revealed* (J&S Aquarian Publishing, 1988), and was the first book that ever discussed in detail any information about crystal skulls besides the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. However, the information and conclusions presented in that book by Nick and I have

become dated and will be updated in this book.

In 1988, I accompanied several individuals involved in the production of that book to Scottsdale, Arizona to see and experience the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. The skull was being exhibited at a UFO conference by Anna Mitchell-Hedges, who was the owner and keeper of the skull at the time. I was able to spend several hours each day, for a few days, with this skull. The skull is eleven pounds, seven ounces, of clear optical-grade quartz crystal with a separate, detachable jaw. The skull was as clear as glass and almost perfect—I say almost because many who have written about the Hedges Skull have described it as perfect with no flaws. This is not quite correct as there is one slight occlusion at the top of the skull which I noted in 1988. This skull has also been proclaimed by some dubious researchers as possibly being a human skull that was crystallized. I find this conclusion to be entirely without merit. Although the Mitchell-Hedges Skull is an attempt at an accurate anatomical study of an actual human skull, in my close inspection of the skull I found many instances of it not being completely anatomically correct and not an exact copy of a human skull. The conclusions about his skull will be presented later in this book.

In May of 1989, I attended the Whole Life Expo in San Francisco, California. I went, primarily, to hear Nick Nocerino lecture on crystal skulls, the first time I heard him speak publicly on the subject. But I also came to see another crystal skull that was on display. This crystal skull was Max, the Texas Crystal Skull owned by JoAnn and Carl Parks (see Figure 4). Nick introduced me to the Parks, as they all had become close friends by this time, and they kindly allowed me to have extensive time to experience and examine Max. Max is the crystal skull I have spent the most time with and is so important that there will be a separate chapter in this book just about this skull. Max has become the most studied, tested and publicly available of all the crystal skulls since 1987.

In 1999, at the second of Dr. Chet Snow's conferences on crystal healing and crystal skulls in Sedona, Arizona, I was able to connect with another of Nick Nocerino's students, DaEl Walker, himself the author of a book on crystals. DaEl had been a part of Nick's research team in Canada that studied the Mitchell-Hedges Skull in 1985. DaEl had acquired several crystal skulls

in Mexico and had brought them to the conference. Three of these skulls, named by DaEl as “Rainbow,” “Madre,” and “Zar,” were very interesting and DaEl allowed me some time with them (see Figure 5). Although I did not have time to fully and adequately test and work with these skulls, I felt strong impressions from all three. My initial impression of Rainbow, a small—perhaps the size of a child’s skull—clear quartz skull with beautiful spectral colors, was that it could be an ancient artifact. I also had strong feelings that Madre, a large full-sized clear-cloudy quartz skull, and Zar, an unusual looking, hollow cloudy, yellowish quartz crystal skull, were definitely old and perhaps even ancient.

Fig.4-Max, the Texas Crystal Skull. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 2000.

Fig.5-Madre, Rainbow and Zar. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 1999.

Several skulls owned by Joke Van Dieten were also at this conference in Sedona in 1999. Although she did not allow me any access to these skulls, I did get to observe them close up. I felt most of her skulls were contemporary, or perhaps some of them old. However, one specimen, a smoky-quartz skull with an elongated head that she had named “ET” because of its unusual shape, had very powerful energy that I could detect even at a distance. Nick Nocerino got to work with this skull and said to me that it was definitely old, and quite possibly an ancient crystal skull.

In 2001, at the third of Chet Snow’s conferences in Sedona, Nick brought his skull, Sha-Na-Ra. I had first seen this skull in 1998 but had not had any time with it. Nick allowed me and my wife, Theresa, to have a few hours with Sha-Na-Ra for observation and study. Sha-Na-Ra is a large, full-sized cloudy-clear quartz skull with an ancient looking visage, weighing about thirteen pounds (see Figure 6). I immediately perceived that the skull resembled an ancient hominid called *Homo Erectus* by physical anthropologists, and that alone made me feel strongly that it was an ancient artifact. More on this in the chapter on crystal skull research.

In summary, I would say that I have seen many crystal skulls that are ancient artifacts. In studies and testing that I and others have done, the Mayan Crystal Skull, the Amethyst Crystal Skull, Max (the Texas Crystal Skull), and Sha-Na-Ra (the Nocerino Crystal Skull), have been revealed to be genuine ancient crystal skulls. The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull is the most

controversial of all of the skulls, and is definitely old and possibly ancient. Rainbow, Madre and Zar, crystal skulls owned by DaEl Walker, are old and also possibly ancient. ET, owned by Joke Van Dieten, is also old and possibly ancient. This comprises a list of four, possibly nine, skulls that I know of that may be ancient artifacts that cannot be explained by the accepted academic paradigms of anthropology.

Many people have claimed that this skull or that one are ancient, but those mentioned here are the only ones tested by organizations I consider competent: Nick Nocerino and the Society of Crystal Skulls, International; myself at the Rosicrucian Research Laboratories; Hewlett-Packard Laboratories; or the British Museum laboratories. Nick Nocerino mentioned as many as eighteen skulls he had seen or experienced that he would classify as ancient, including (in addition to the foregoing): the Templar Crystal Skull known as “The Blood of Christ,” the Rose Quartz Crystal Skull, and an amethyst skull Nick called the San Jose Skull (not the amethyst skull I discuss, but one from San Jose, Mexico). Nick never did get to delineate the other ones in detail to me.

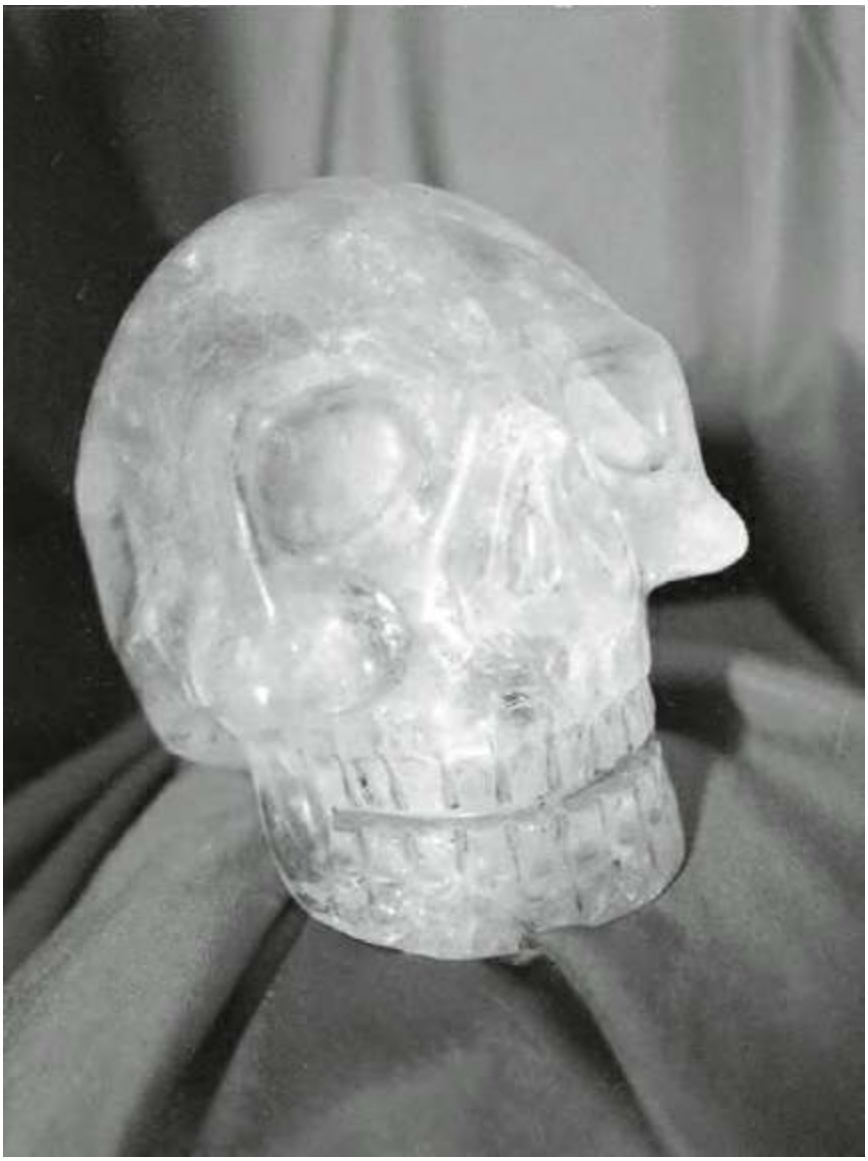


Fig. 6-Sha-Na-Ra, the Nocerino Crystal Skull. Photo by Charles Pelton. 1999.

Chapter 7

Crystal Skull Research

There are more things in Heaven and Earth,
Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
—William Shakespeare

There are many books written about some aspect of crystal skulls. The overwhelming majority of them, if not all, have been written by journalists or researchers who have not done any original research of their own. To my knowledge, only Hewlett-Packard Laboratories in Santa Clara, California; the Society of Crystal Skulls, International in San Pablo, California;the Rosicrucian Research Laboratory in San Jose, California; and the British Museum in London, England—on two occasions, in 1936 and 1996—have done any legitimate scientific testing of and research on crystal skulls. There have been some reports in recent years that the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC has tested some of the crystal skulls mentioned in this book, but this is false and will be addressed in the next chapter.

As mentioned, Nick Nocerino and his students established methods of classification and testing of crystal skulls at the Society of Crystal Skulls, International in the 1960s and ‘70s. Using the designations of contemporary, old and ancient for classification, Nick Nocerino introduced the technique of “scrying” or crystal-gazing to his students. Scrying is an archaic term that describes a person attempting to interact through their own consciousness with a crystal to “see” scenes in the crystal. As Nick taught, when one works

with a clear crystal like the Mitchell-Hedges Skull, one has to “fog” the crystal in order to see scenes in it. When working with a cloudy crystal like the Mayan Crystal Skull, one has to “clear” the crystal in order to see scenes in it. This technique has been used for centuries by occultists utilizing a crystal ball “to see the future!” The more modern technique in use is called psychometry, popularized by Professor J.B. Rhine of Duke University in the 1930s, who has been called the “Father of Parapsychology.” Psychometry involves a person holding an “unknown,” a historical or prehistoric artifact that does not have a recorded history, or provenance. Provenance is a term used in archaeology that means a find or excavation is documented, recorded and witnessed to keep an accurate recording of artifacts—it establishes a “chain of custody.” Archaeologists maintain a chain of custody to record and document exactly where and when an artifact was found, and its later movements to a museum or private hands. Most of the crystal skulls have dubious provenance as there are no accurate scientific records of when and how they were found and where they were excavated. The person doing psychometry with an object states what images or scenes or information they get from the object. Using psychometry in a scientific or laboratory setting, where impressions obtained by different observers can be compared, may be the only way to get information concerning an unknown object that has no documentable archaeological provenance.

The British Museum was involved in the earliest known scientific inquiry into crystal skulls in 1936. The results of this study were published in the July 1936 edition of MAN,a monthly journal published under the direction of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Two crystal skulls were studied and compared; they were the British Museum Skull and another that was called “The Burney Skull”—this was the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. In 1936, this skull was in the possession of Sydney Burney, a London art dealer. In fact, there is no credible evidence of F.A. Mitchell-Hedges ever having owned this skull before 1944. Several scientists, including Dr. G.M. Morant, a well-known British anthropologist; Adrian Digby, who was to become the Keeper of the British Museum’s Department of Ethnology; and H.J. Braunhotz, of the British Museum staff were involved in this study. The results were interesting, both for the time and now. The scientists all agreed there was no reliable known way to date carved crystal scientifically—still true today. All agreed at that time that there was no evidence of modern tool work on either skull. These conclusions have since

been challenged, which we will discuss. Since both skulls seemed so similar to all researchers, it was determined by them that the British Museum Skull was a later copy of the more elaborate and skillfully carved Burney Skull.

Hewlett-Packard Laboratories in Santa Clara, California were involved in examining two crystal skulls in the 1970s. The two skulls were the one then known as the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull and the Mayan Crystal Skull. In 1970, art restorer Frank Dorland had temporary possession of the Hedges Skull and brought it to Hewlett-Packard crystal engineers to test. One of the tests they performed ono this skull was immersion in an alcohol bath to determine the polarity of the crystal. This test indicated the skull and lower jaw were carved from the same “mother” piece of quartz. It was also determined that the skull was carved against the natural grain of its axis of growth, which indicated the carving was not done with modern power tools as the crystals would shatter under the vibrations of a power tool. Electron scanning microscopy also did not reveal any evidence of metal tool marks or the use of a lapidary wheel to carve the teeth.

The same tests on the Mayan Crystal Skull, under the direction of John Zamora, were performed by Hewlett-Packard crystal engineers in 1979. The results were the same; it was carved away from the natural axis of the crystal and there was no evidence of metal tool marks or a lapidary wheel used in carving. Hewlett-Packard scientists came to the same conclusions about both skulls; namely, that they had no idea how or when the crystals were carved into skulls and that in their minds, neither skull should exist! There has been mention in some books or on websites that Hewlett-Packard had also examined the Amethyst Crystal Skull, but Nick Nocerino told me in 2001 that when he asked Hewlett-Packard Laboratories about this, they had no record of working with this skull.

In the three months that Nick Nocerino and his organization had the Mayan Crystal Skull, they performed many tests and held several sessions

(see Figures 1 and 2). Nick utilized as many as thirty-three of his students, personally trained in scrying and psychometry, to work with this skull. They also employed colored lights, lasers, and varied audio techniques to interact with the crystal skull. Detailed questionnaires were filled out by all who took part in these sessions. Some of the results were that over half of the respondents reported hearing jungle sounds, saw scenes of the ancient Maya in ceremony, and witnessed past events such as global catastrophes and severe Earth changes. It was determined that light, color and sound were excellent means for activating and utilizing the crystal skulls.

Fig. 1-Mayan Crystal Skull. Society of Crystal Skulls, International. Photo by Susan Emigh. 1980.

For two complete day sessions, I was able to direct the research done on the Mayan Crystal Skull at the Rose-Croix Laboratory in Rosicrucian Park in San Jose, California in 1980. As previously mentioned, the first full-day session occurred on January 4, 1980 and featured Dr. Marcel Vogeland Michael Campbell. Dr. Vogel, who had previously worked with the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull and the British Museum Skull, proclaimed all the crystal skulls acted as ancient computers to store information. Vogel stated that the information stored in crystal can be accessed by the use of breath and sound. He then demonstrated this by using different deep-breathing techniques and chanting vowel sounds to “go into the skull,” as he termed it. I have tried these techniques and they have always worked for me. Vogel declared that the Mayan Skull was also used as a “language decoder,”

bringing coherent information to the mind bypassing whatever particular language one spoke. Vogel had all of us present at the session tone various vowel sounds with him and that definitely seemed to activate the skull. Vogel also stated that light and color were effective in activating crystal and crystal skulls.

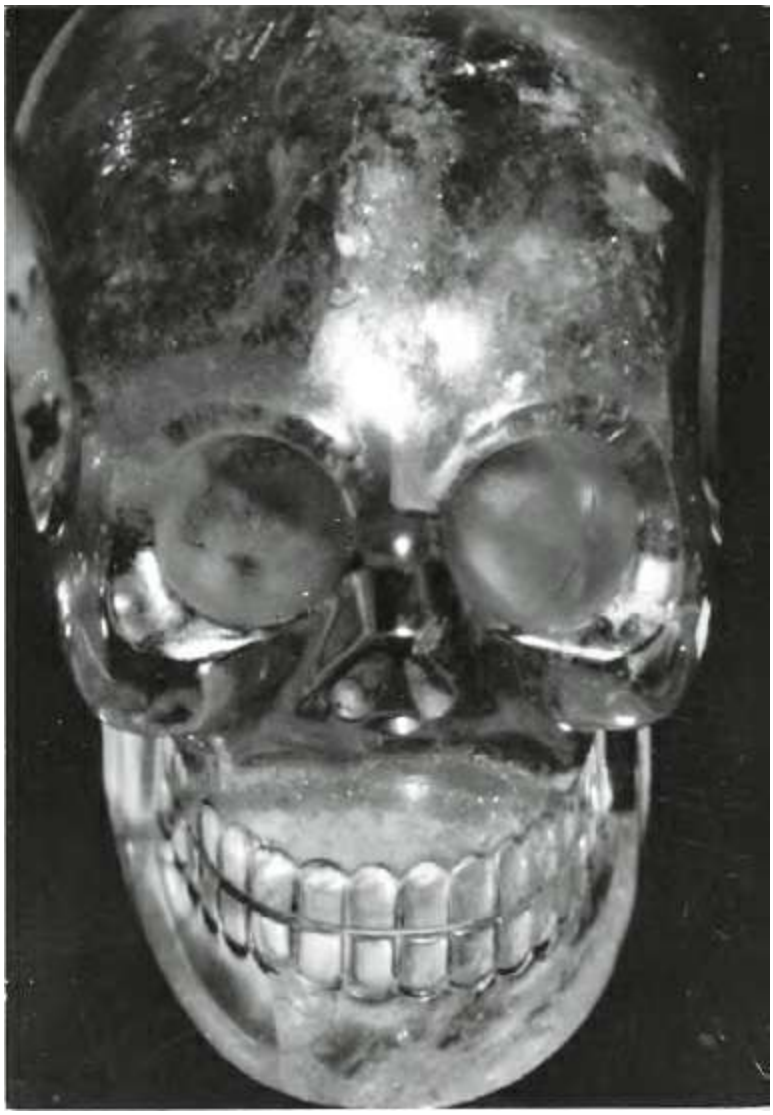


Fig. 2-Mayan Crystal Skull. Society of Crystal Skulls, International. Photo by Susan Emigh. 1980.

Dr. Marcel Vogel also presented to us two interesting theories, the first relating to how crystals are manufactured, and the second, as to how crystal

stores information. Vogel mentioned a process he called “Concoidal Fracturing.” The crystal fractures upon formation and then fuses together under great heat and pressure, as in a volcano. He stated that he felt strongly the crystal was shaped into skulls by hand, not with any power tools, using quartz or diamond sand as a “grit” for polishing by hand. As for storing information, Vogel discussed the theories of defects found in crystals. He explained what he termed “The Lattice Defect Theory.” Crystals in general and quartz crystals in particular can be subject to two types of defects, known as line or point defects. Vogel discussed point defects for our purposes. Quartz crystal is chemically classified as silicon dioxide—a silicon atom bonded to two oxygen atoms arranged in a hexagonal (six sided) form. Sometimes the silicon atom in one bond may be “missing” and is called a point defect. A small piece of quartz crystal may have hundreds, if not thousands, of point defects in the lattice of the crystal. Vogel then said these defects or gaps in the atomic structure of a crystal can be occupied by energy pulsed into the crystal. Human thought can be that pulsed energy. By breathing into the crystal skull, Vogel said we can pulse thought, therefore information as energy into the space left “open” by a point defect. Vogel stated a crystal skull may have millions, if not more, point defects and this is how information was stored in the skulls by the ancients. Marcel Vogel held a Ph.D. in chemistry, and since I had a background in chemistry as a minor in college, the theory made sense to me. I found verification of Vogel’s Lattice Defect Theory in many scientific books on the subject, upon further research into crystallography and the chemistry of liquid and solid crystals.

The afternoon session on January 4, 1980 was with Michael Campbell. Michael had much experience doing psychometry and had been tested by several parapsychologists previously in New York City. Michael got very emotional during his session with the skull, as he claimed to be “seeing” many scenes of violence and destruction from within it. He later reported he had seen many scenes of massive Earth changes and cataclysms with great loss of life, human and otherwise, occurring many thousands, hundreds of thousands, or millions of years ago on this planet. Michael also spoke of an extraterrestrial element to the skull, or even more correctly, an interdimensional connection. Michael “saw” a very distant time on our planet when different life forms were competing for who would populate this world and this involved both physical ET forms and non-physical interdimensional beings. Michael reacted very emotionally, sobbing and sighing, during these

“competition” scenes. He was profoundly moved and shaken from these sessions and needed a long period to “cool down” afterwards. Michael felt very strongly that the crystal skulls had been, and could still be, used to communicate with other beings, both past and present.

In March of 1980, John Zamora again brought in the Mayan Skull for a whole day of testing. That day I arranged for psychometry sessions with many Rosicrucians who had been tested for unusual sensitivity before by the Research Department. They included artists, crystallographers, scientists, mystics, and stone and lapidary carvers. I had these sessions recorded, and had people fill out questionnaires afterward. One Rosicrucian scientist who was a part of these sessions brought in a device known as a *Monochrometer*, a machine that projects pure colors of the spectrum on any other object. We spent some time projecting different colors on the Mayan Skull with interesting results (see Figures 3 and 4). The colors projected at the skull that elucidated those most positive reactions from us all were purple, purple-blue, blue and green. We photographed many of these tests. The Mayan Crystal Skull seemed to vibrate particularly strongly to the purple-blue range. When we projected a deep red color on the skull, we all reacted negatively and strongly as the skull seemed “angry”—we all wanted the color turned off immediately! We also used a laser with the Mayan Skull and found that a beam of light projected into the “third eye” of the crystal face reflected out the sides of the skull, as if the optics were purposefully incorporated into the carving of the skull for those effects.

Fig. 3-Mayan Crystal Skull. Rosicrucian Research Laboratory. Photo by Jerry Chapman. 1980.

To sum up these results, over 75% of respondents heard sounds, particularly jungle sounds, 80% saw ancient Mayan, Olmec and ancient Egyptian scenes, and preferred certain colors—particularly, purple, purple-blue, blue and green. We all felt that these were the colors the crystal skull "favored," and 90% of the participants felt tremendous energy from the skull, most as a tingling in the extremities, or as electrical pulses going up their arms and all over their bodies while touching the skull. Some people experienced fear, and saw scenes of violence and sacrificial rites by indigenous cultures that had the skull. These scenes also involved the violent removal of a victim's heart and the skull put in the empty cavity in its place.

I later was able to have the Mayan Crystal Skull in my personal possession for a few days and received many impressions of my own. Most were very similar to others recorded and I did feel that many perversions had been perpetrated with this skull—namely, by the late Toltec tribes that had conquered the Maya and practiced ritual sacrifices by removing the still-beating heart from a victim and placing the crystal skull in the empty space. Nick Nocerino later confirmed to me that he and his students had felt and experienced the same scenes of perversion.

I had left employment with the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, when I had the opportunity to experience the Amethyst Crystal Skull in late 1982 and early 1983. I did not have access to a lab or lab equipment, but in the week that I had possession of the skull, I arranged for many psychometry sessions. I was able to arrange sessions with both Marcel Vogel and Nick Nocerino. In February 1983, a friend and I brought Marcel Vogel to the home of John Zamora in San Jose, California and he had a few hours with the Amethyst Skull. Vogel spoke of this skull being made by the same people who made the Mayan Skull, but not necessarily during the same time period. He also stated that this skull was used as an information storage medium to interact with human consciousness. Vogel saw Mayan scenes in the skull and stated that it had gone through many hands and civilizations. In April of 1983, I arranged a session with Nick Nocerino, who came from his home in San Pablo, California to the home of John Zamora in San Jose. This was the first

time I met Nick and got to experience him work with a crystal skull (see Figure 5). Nick had seen many amethyst crystal skulls but was impressed with this one. He also utilized breathing techniques to attune to the crystal and went deep into the skull. Nick got very emotional and later told me that he witnessed at least two major global catastrophic events in the skull. He also heard many sounds that he felt were “underwater” and had seen many ancient civilizations—some under water, some on land (see Figure 6). Nick also later told me he had felt a “presence” around the skull, possibly an interdimensional consciousness using the skull to interact with human third-dimensional consciousness. Nick said he never felt this presence to be malevolent or evil, just “curious” and interested in this interaction.

Fig.4-Mayan Crystal Skull. Rosicrucian Research laboratory. Photo by Jerry Chapman. 1980.

Fig. 5-Stephen Mehler and Nick Nocerino with Amethyst Crystal Skull. Photo by Francoise Beaudoin. 1983.

In March of 1983, I arranged a gathering with the Mayan priest Francisco Reyes, the Amethyst Skull, and many Rosicrucian and metaphysical friends at the bookstore owned by my dear friend, Francoise Beaudoin. Ram Metaphysical Books, a central gathering spot for many seekers in the 1980s and '90s in San Jose, California was located right across the street from Rosicrucian Park. I asked Francisco to lead us in a meditation with the skull and show us how he would work with it. We made a semi-circle around him in the candlelight, and he held the skull at his navel, facing away from his body, toward us. He put the thumbs and two forefingers of both his hands around the "third" eye of the skull. We meditated for a while, and after an indeterminate amount of time, I heard a voice in my head say, "That's enough. It is done!" I opened my eyes and Francisco was looking at me and nodded—he did not speak English but had communicated to me through the skull! Francisco Reyes demonstrated this ability on many occasions in conversations we had. I don't speak Spanish, he didn't speak English, so John Zamora acted as interpreter (see Figure 7). One time I was asking Francisco questions through Zamora, and I asked Francisco, while looking directly into his eyes, about the Mayans using the crystal skulls in ritual sacrifice. He answered in Spanish, still looking directly into my eyes. John translated what was said as: "He said the Mayans didn't often do sacrifices." I responded, "No, John, he said the Mayans **never** practiced human or animal sacrifices!"

Zamora was astounded and said, “I thought you don’t speak Spanish!” Francisco had communicated directly into my mind what he meant— using the skull to bypass “language” (a word which really means “tongue-work!”).

Fig. 6-Nick Nocerino and Amethyst Crystal Skull. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 1983.

Fig. 7-John Zamora with Amethyst Crystal Skull. Photo by Francoise Beaudoin. 1983.

As stated, in the week that I had possession of the Amethyst Skull, I arranged many psychometry sessions with such varied individuals as archaeologists, anthropologists, chemists, geologists, all types of artists, crystal and stone carvers and many healers. No one was present at the session of another and I recorded all reactions. All felt great energy in and around the skull and about 75% of participants saw scenes of ancient cultures such as the Mayan, Olmec, Aztec and even ancient Egyptian. The majority of people heard sounds and saw colors, and many felt a protective essence of the skull. One session, with a woman who had gained fame as the “Earthquake Lady,” Clarissa Bernhardt, was particularly interesting. In 1983, Clarissa was on record with the US Geological Survey as someone who was accurate in

predicting earthquakes. In her session she remarked that the Amethyst Skull was a great protective device and would “guard” its owner. This impression greatly reinforced my own strong feelings that amethyst in general, and this skull in particular, is a highly protective stone. There is another interesting sidebar to Clarissa’s session. Her male partner at the time had accompanied her to the session. He obviously had “tied one on” the night before and was suffering from a terrible hangover and headache. After handling the Amethyst Crystal Skull for a few minutes, he reported his headache and hangover were completely gone! I subsequently learned that the Greek word *amethystos*, from where we get the Latin *amethystus* and thus the English *amethyst*, means “without drunkenness”—the stone had been utilized in the Greco-Roman ancient world as a remedy for hangovers from excessive drinking of alcohol.

Fig. 8-Stephen Mehler with Amethyst Crystal Skull.Photo by Francoise Beaudoin. 1983.

I was able to record all the psychometry sessions with the Amethyst Skull. All participants reported feelings of joy and peace from the skull and none reported the violence, fear and ritual sacrifice that was associated with the Mayan Skull. I also felt the Amethyst Skull was not used by the Toltecs in ritual sacrificial rites. As amethyst is my favorite stone, I really personally vibrated to this skull and found for the whole week that I had it, I slept and ate very little and had tremendous energy the whole time. I could only go to sleep if I “powered-down” the skull, wrapping it in silk, putting it in its case and letting it “go to sleep.” The week I spent with the Amethyst Crystal Skull was one of the most profound experiences I had ever had (see Figures 8 and 9). It confirmed to me why I was on the path I had chosen, why I had been

led into science, metaphysics and mysticism—an affirmation of myself! I also began to see scenes of ancient civilizations in my mind when I worked with the skull alone, especially scenes of very ancient Egypt—scenes never discussed in books on Egypt that I had read. This led me further into deeper explorations of my extreme interest in the ancient Egyptian civilization. I finally went to Egypt in 1992, and found and started working with an Egyptian master of the oral tradition of his country. Some of the scenes I saw in the Amethyst Crystal Skull in 1983 such as the Giza Plateau having been once lush and green with abundant rainfall in the area, and the Sphinx and Pyramids at Giza having been built in prehistoric times have found their way into the two books I subsequently wrote about ancient Egypt in 2001 and 2005.

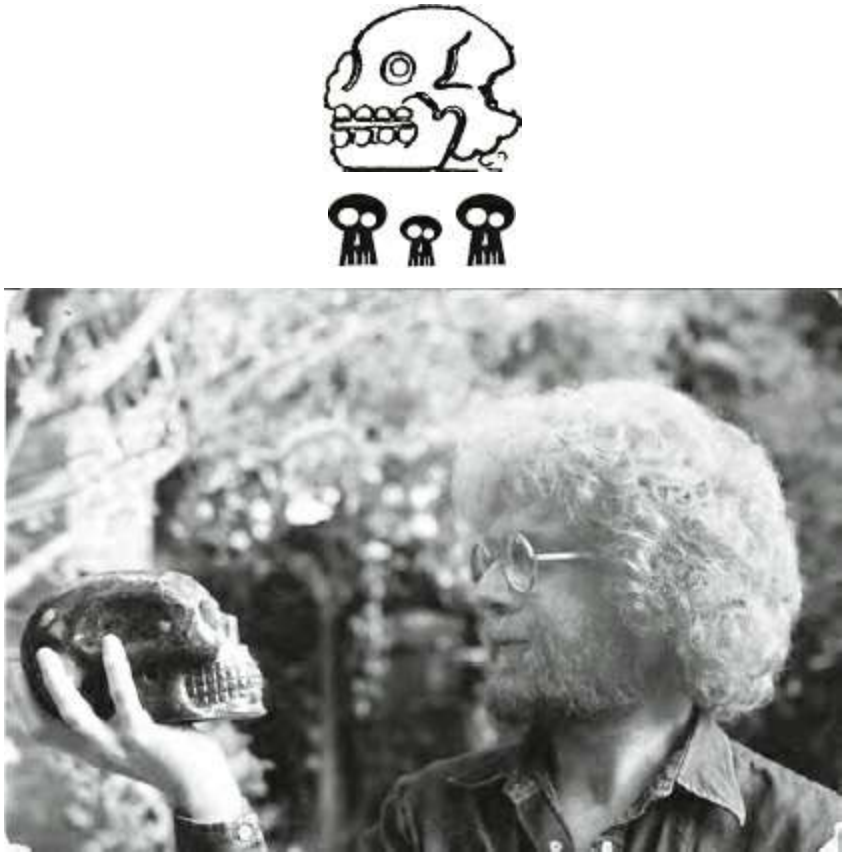


Fig. 9-Stephen Mehler with Amethyst Crystal Skull. Photo by Francoise Beaudoin. 1983.

As noted previously, in 1985, Nick Nocerino led his research team to

Canada to study the Mitchell-Hedges Skull in detail. Nick reported receiving tremendous energy from the skull and measured the "aura" around this skull for a great distance from Anna Mitchell-Hedges' house. His group saw many scenes using both scrying and psychometry (see Figure 10). In 1988, I was able to study the Hedges Skull briefly in Scottsdale, Arizona. I saw many scenes of Mayan civilization and ceremonies around the skull. I felt, in 1988, that this skull was ancient. I have since altered this opinion, and Nick Nocerino also changed his early opinion.

In 1996, the British Museum and BBC Television did a special on crystal skulls. They brought the following skulls in to be tested with modern equipment: the British Museum Skull; Max, The Texas Crystal Skull; a large hollow skull from the Smithsonian Institution; a modern-carved skull from Germany; another known Aztec crystal skull; and Sha-Na-Ra, the Nocerino Crystal Skull. The British Museum also asked Anna Mitchell-Hedges to bring her skull in to be tested, but she declined saying the skull had been tested enough! This study will be discussed in detail in the chapter on Max, but I will mention here that the results reported on BBC television were that their own skull was modern-carved, an opinion in opposition to the conclusions they had previously reached in their 1936 study—which, it should be noted, was accomplished without the use of a scanning electron microscope. In fact, the British Museum stated that most of the skulls they tested were modern carved but as for Max and Sha-Na-Ra, no test results were announced—the British Museum had "no comment" on these two skulls.

The few hours I spent with Sha-Na-Ra in 2001 produced very interesting results for me. The crystal that the skull was made from seemed very ancient to me, and there were iron and grit deposits still imbedded in the skull which indicated to me that it had been buried for a long time. I recognized that the physiognomy of the head resembles a class of early hominids known as *Homo erectus*, which were an extant species circa 500,000 to over one million years ago. Physical anthropologists classify Homo erectus as a transitional form that evolved into our species, *Homo sapiens.* At this stage in my life, I am not a supporter of Darwinian linear evolution, especially what is termed "macroevolution," that is, one species directly changing and evolving into a brand new species over time. I prefer to classify Homo erectus as an early hominid species that died out, went extinct, and may have co-existed with early Homo sapiens, but did not evolve into modern man. As the field of Physical Anthropology has itself evolved over the last fifty years, Homo

sapiens skulls have been found that are dated over 100,000 years old, and footprints of possible early Homo sapiens have been found in volcanic strata dated to over three million years old. The amazing thing about this whole discussion is that whoever carved Sha-Na-Ra was apparently **aware** of these ancient creatures and modeled the skull after a long extinct species of hominid. This would tend to lead one to think that this skull was modern-carved, as Homo erectus has only been known to modern science for about 150 years. But analysis of this crystal skull belies that thinking. The British researchers had no comment on their testing, but I have plenty to say. Sha-Na-Ra is unevenly carved, the polish is also uneven and the teeth are uneven, all leading to the conclusion that the skull was not carved with modern power tools or a lapidary wheel (see Figure 11).As with Max, one side of the face is not symmetrical with the other, more like a "real" skull, and not machined, but done by hand. I saw many ancient scenes in Sha-Na-Ra and felt strongly it was also a record-keeper, like so many of the skulls, and was carved by a master artist and shaman. I left my session with Sha-Na-Ra with strong feelings and impressions that it was a genuine ancient crystal skull, carved into a skull well over 10,000 years ago. I have also witnessed Max and Sha-Na-Ra together, and it seemed to me they "knew" each other, exchanged energies as electrical pulses, and wanted to work together (see Figure 12).

Fig. 10-Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. Photo by Nick Nocerino. 1985.

The crystal skulls mentioned in this chapter that I tested, or Nick Nocerino saw and tested, are the only ones I am aware of that have been subjected to

any scientific or rigorous parapsychological testing. These are the only ones I would mention as ancient crystal skulls, but that there may be many more out there that I have not seen and tested remains a distinct possibility.

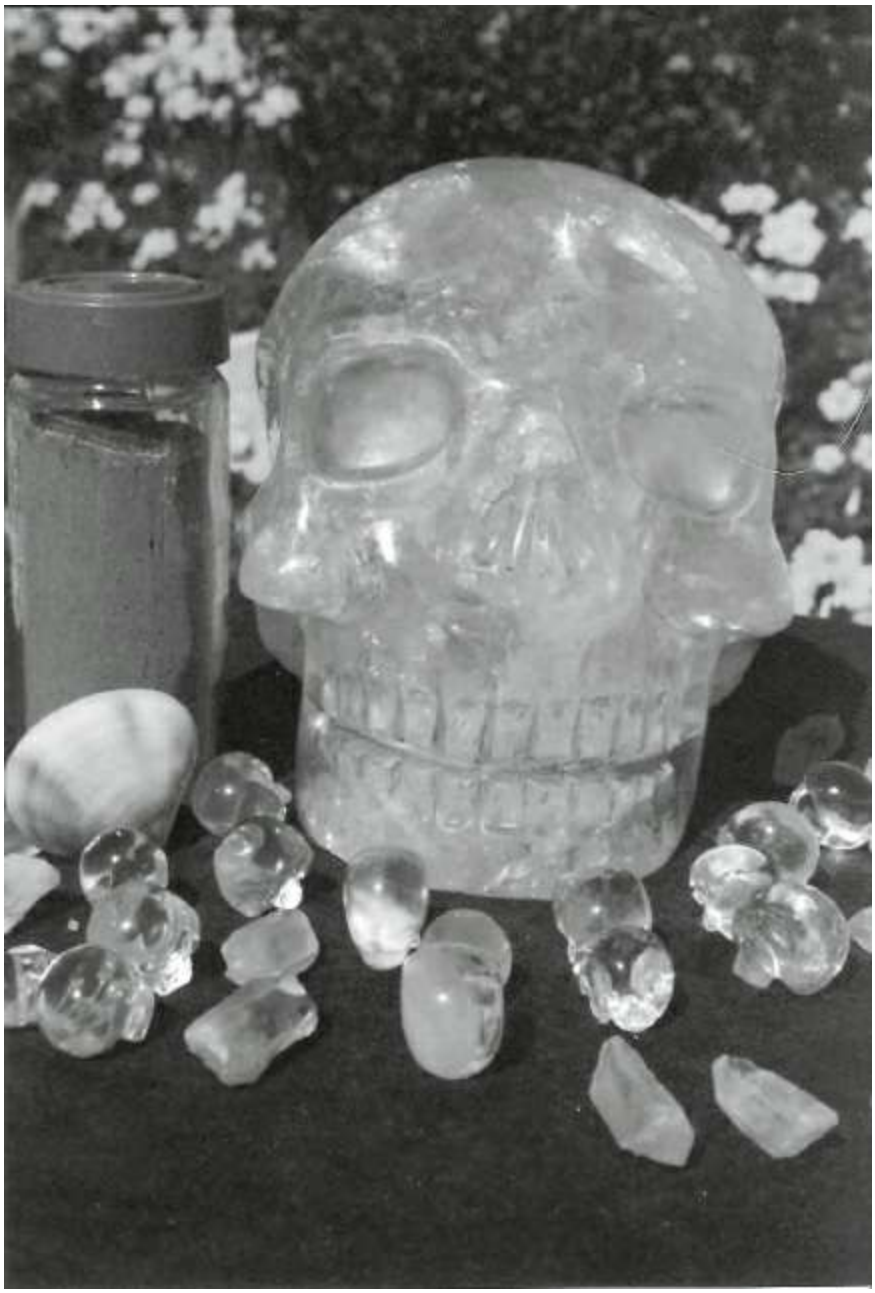


Fig. 11-Sha-Na-Ra, the Nocerino Crystal Skull. Photo by Nick Nocerino. 2000.

Fig. 12-Max and Sha-Na-Ra. Photo by Eric Luckey. 2006.

Chapter 8

Max: The Texas Crystal Skull

Mankind will not awaken until we learn
how to blend each other's truths for love and peace.
It all begins within.
—Max, *through JoAnn Parks*

Sometime in early 1987, several people who had been involved in crystal skull research informed me that another crystal skull had surfaced—this according to the crystal skull "pipeline." At first, the skull was referred to as simply "The Texas Crystal Skull," as it was in the possession of JoAnn and Carl Parks of Houston, Texas. Today the skull is known as "Max," as the skull itself told JoAnn that was its "name," and she has been travelling all over the US and other countries with this unique artifact.

JoAnn Parks is an amazing woman, and the story of her life and adventures with Max will be a whole book and documentary film one day in itself. In the past twenty plus years that JoAnn has been travelling with and presenting Max to the general public, Max has become the most viewed, studied and interactive ancient crystal skull (See Figure 1).

Fig. 1-JoAnn Parks and Max. Boulder, CO. Photo by Joseph Swanson. 1997.

As JoAnn tells her story, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, she was “just” a simple, moderately religious Lutheran housewife and mother, living with her husband Carl and children in suburban Houston, Texas. Carl Parks, a humble, modest man and Vietnam War combat veteran, had a furniture finishing and repair business and they were living the “average”American lifestyle. However, their twelve-year old daughter, Diana Lynn, was diagnosed in 1972 with a severe form of bone cancer. Exhausting all medical

solutions known to them, doctors told the Parks that their daughter was not expected to recover—in fact, they said she would only survive about three to six months with the severity of her cancer. At this time Carl Parks had done some furniture repair work for a foundation in Houston called the Chakpori Ling Foundation. The foundation was run by Tibetan Buddhist monks who were practicing Tibetan healing techniques. Carl told JoAnn about the foundation and she went there herself and met the founder and leader of the group in early 1973, a man called Norbu Chen.

JoAnn Parks first saw Max in 1973 sitting on an altar in the foundation where he had been part of the healing work done by the monks. Even though she did not understand any of what the monks were doing or practicing, JoAnn was drawn to them and to Norbu Chen, who was an American. She found out that Norbu Chen was the first American to be admitted into the Red Hat sect and also the first to be admitted into the Red Hat Buddhist monasteries in Tibet. He was now an ordained monk in the Red Hat sect, the first American ever to achieve this status. Having exhausted all allopathic attempts to help her daughter, JoAnn was willing to try an alternative therapy, urged on by Norbu. JoAnn convinced Carl to bring their daughter to the foundation and let Norbu and the other monks “work” on her with Max and all their ancient Tibetan healing modalities. The result was that even though Western doctors had said she would not live long, Norbu Chen and the Tibetan monks, and Max, enabled Diana to survive for three years and to pass on in peace.

During this process, JoAnn came to the foundation every day and became friendly with the monks and Norbu Chen. Carl Parks continued to do furniture repair work for the foundation and Norbu was very grateful and considered the monks indebted to the Parks. Before Norbu Chen passed away in June of 1977, he gave the crystal skull to the Parks, ostensibly because of all the work Carl had done for the foundation, but there was more to this decision. We are all now sure that Max had instructed Norbu that he (Max) should go to JoAnn as his next keeper. When Norbu informed her he would be leaving Max to her and Carl, he said to JoAnn, “You don’t know what this

is about or what to do with it, but one day you will!" The Parks took possession of Max in late 1977.

Norbu Chen had given JoAnn Parks a brief history of himself and how he obtained the crystal skull, but much more has come out in the intervening years. Norbu Chen, not his family name of course, was an interesting and complex man whose own real life story would be worthy of a George Lucas script. Much of his story is still secret, but it is clear that Norbu had many high-level government contacts and had been involved in several clandestine operations in the '40s and '50s. He travelled to Tibet to escape his checkered past when there were not many Westerners going there, and became a Red Hat Tibetan Buddhist monk. He went through severe tests and trials to be ordained and became well versed in ancient Tibetan healing practices and techniques. Norbu left Tibet and travelled to many countries and engaged in many healings wherever he went. Sometime in the 1960s, Norbu was in Guatemala working with Mayan priests and shamans and their families. In return for healings he had done with Mayan children, a high-ranking Mayan shaman and priest gave him a large crystal skull to use in his future work as a healer, as the Mayan priests themselves had used the crystal skull for similar purposes. This skull was Max. The Mayans told Norbu that Max had been found in a tomb in Guatemala, near Honduras, in 1924; it was kept in their families and was highly venerated by them. It was extraordinary that they would give the skull to anyone, but Norbu's great healing work had been the impetus for this. Norbu settled in Houston with other Red Hat monks and founded the Chakpori Ling Foundation in the late 1960s.

So in 1977, JoAnn and Carl Parks inherited this large crystal skull without the slightest idea what to do with it. They promptly put the skull in a box and put it on a top shelf in a closet for many years—and basically tried to forget about it. But the crystal skull would not sit "quiet," and as the years went by began to "talk" to JoAnn. At first, JoAnn began to question her sanity and believed she was only imagining she was "hearing" the skull talk to her. She kept hearing the crystal skull saying that he was important and had great work to do, and she must find "the man" who would tell her what he was about and what to do with him. She kept referring to the skull as "a talking

rock" and ignored what she was hearing. Finally in 1987, after the skull had been in her closet for almost ten years, JoAnn saw a special on local TV about a crystal skull. She called the station and told them that she had a crystal skull herself. First, they did not take her seriously, but eventually some people from the station came to her house to see Max. They told her to take it to a Houston museum to see what the officials there would say about it.

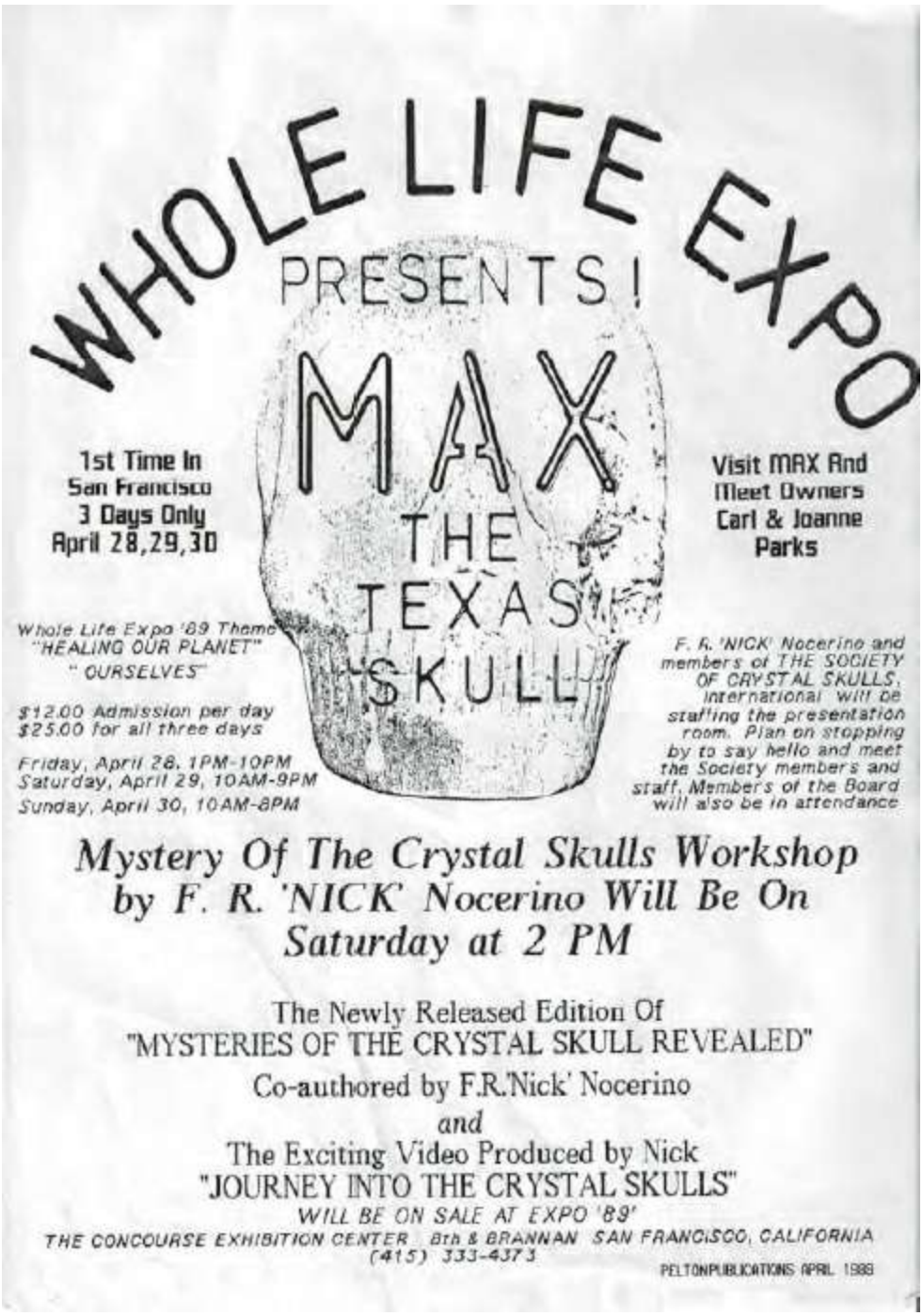
The museum officials were amazed at what they saw as they had never experienced anything like Max before, but could not provide her with any further information. The museum wanted to put the skull on display, but JoAnn refused, as they really didn't know much about crystal skulls. She took the skull home, took him out of the box, patted him on the head and said, "Well, skull, one of these days I will find 'the man.'" She then says she heard him say to her clearly in her mind, "By the way, my name is not 'skull,' but Max!" JoAnn still thought she had lost her senses. Finally, she called the TV station back and they told her there was a man in Northern California whom they had interviewed who seemed to know a lot about these things, and gave her his contact information—this man was Nick Nocerino!

JoAnn called Nick and after his initial skepticism, he asked her to describe the skull. She described it as "a rock with a face on it!" After going back and forth like this with him a few times, she said it was a human face on crystal, but it also had a peculiar "Bar-mitzvah hat" on the top—she was describing the unique white top on the skull which to her resembled a Jewish prayer skullcap known as a *Yarmulke*. Nick got quiet and then very serious; then he yelled into the phone, "You have the skull with the white cap?" She said yes, and Nick informed her, "I know what you have; I have been searching for this crystal skull since 1949!" Nick then took JoAnn's address and promised to come see her. After she hung up with Nick, Max proclaimed to her, "You have found the man I told you about and I can finally get out of this box!"

Nick came to Houston soon thereafter, examined and tested Max, and declared him to be a genuine ancient crystal skull. This began a close friendship and partnership between Nick Nocerino and Carl and JoAnn Parks that lasted until Nick's passing in 2004—actually, that still continues to this day. Nick further informed me that he had been tracking Max since the 1950s and had known the skull had fallen into Norbu's hands in the '60s. Nick had written to Norbu Chen to inquire about the skull but never received a reply. As "fate" (or Max) would have it, Nick was not supposed to find Max until

he was in the Parks' possession so this great friendship and collaboration between them could be realized.

Nick began instructing JoAnn about crystals and crystal skulls, and they began to take Max to gatherings and conferences in 1988. As mentioned, I first experienced Max at the Whole Life Expo in San Francisco, California on April 29, 1989 (see Figure 2). Nick introduced me to the Parks—one of many things that I am eternally grateful to him for—and they allowed me to be with Max much longer than anyone else. My first impressions of Max were significant; as I had already seen and worked with the Mayan Crystal Skull, the Amethyst Crystal Skull and the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull, I immediately noticed that Max was unique among them. Much larger than the others at eighteen pounds, two ounces, it was also obvious that Max was not carved from just one piece of crystal, as the others were. There seemed to be several different types of quartz crystal that had been fused together upon formation of the "mother" piece that he was carved from. We now know that the skull has five different sections and two different matrixes that were fused together many centuries ago under tremendous heat and pressure, and that the mother piece was chosen because of this unique and powerful formation. Max was a mostly cloudy quartz crystal when I first saw him—he has actually cleared in some spots in the intervening nineteen years. Both the crystal itself and the carving that was Max "screamed" great antiquity to me. But Max was gentle to me, without the great "wired" energy I had felt from the Mayan and Mitchell-Hedges skulls. The feelings I got from Max initially were gentle and loving, with a distinct sense of humor—I strongly felt when I left that Max had been very sacred and used in ceremony and healing by the early Mayans, and had not been used in human or animal sacrifices and had not been perverted by later Toltec priests.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Visit MAX And Meet Owners Carl & Joanne Parks
Whole Life Expo '89 Theme "HEALING OUR PLANET" " OURSELVES"
$12.00 Admission per day $25.00 for all three days
Friday, April 28, 1PM-10PM
Saturday, April 29, 10AM-9PM
Sunday, April 30, 10AM-8PM
F. R. 'NICK' Nocerino and members of THE SOCIETY OF CRYSTAL SKULLS, International will be staffing the presentation room. Plan on stopping by to say hello and meet the Society members and staff. Members of the Board will also be in attendance
Mystery Of The Crystal Skulls Workshop by F. R. 'NICK' Nocerino Will Be On Saturday at 2 PM
The Newly Released Edition Of
"MYSTERIES OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL REVEALED"
Co-authored by F.R.Nick' Nocerino
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The Exciting Video Produced by Nick
"JOURNEY INTO THE CRYSTAL SKULLS"
WILL BE ON SALE AT EXPO '89'
THE CONCOURSE EXHIBITION CENTER 8th & BRANNAN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
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Fig. 2-Flyer for Whole Life Expo, San Francisco, CA. 1989.

When JoAnn first introduced me to Max, all she said was, “There’s the rock. Have fun!” Now, almost nineteen years later, JoAnn lectures about Max for hours in her presentations all around the US. As she says, Nick taught her a great deal about crystals and crystal skulls but the majority of information she now presents has been channeled to her over the years from Max himself. It is now obvious, as I have been taught by many different masters,

metaphysical traditions and teachers, that there are no accidents or miracles, and that it was JoAnn Parks' destiny to have Max and become a great teacher in her own right. The presentations that JoAnn puts on with Max almost every weekend of the year, except during the summer, are inspiring and profoundly moving experiences for all who attend them.

In February of 2008, both JoAnn and I were interviewed by NBC News for a Sci-Fi Television Channel special on crystal skulls (see Figure 3). At a Saturday night gathering at the Meta Center in lower Manhattan, NBC also filmed our ceremony with Max which was led by visionary artist and healer Jodi Serota (see Figure 4). There were over a hundred people at the gathering, and NBC was able to record many of the deep experiences the people there had.

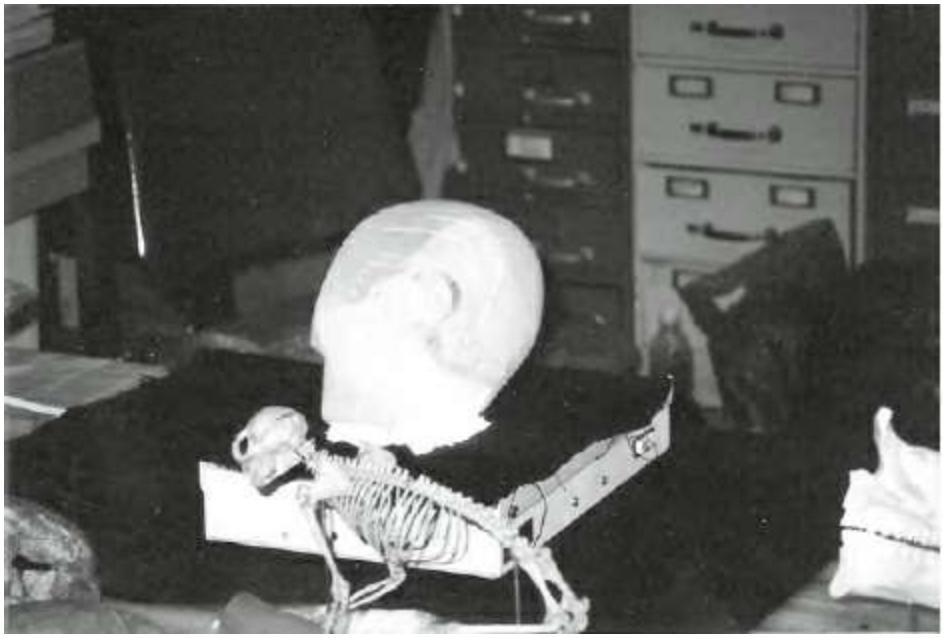


Fig. 3-Max, the Texas Crystal Skull. Brooklyn College's Department of Archaeology, Brooklyn, New York. NBC Sci-Fi Television special. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 2008.

Since 1987 and especially since 1995, Max has been the crystal skull that I and others have most studied, tested and used in ceremony and ritual. He has interacted with many varied individuals. Max has been seen and examined by archaeologists, anthropologists, engineers, geologists, crystallographers, stone and crystal carvers, chemists, physicists, lapidary experts, musicians, physicians, chiropractors, healers of many different modalities, historians,

museum curators, and artists of all types.All have been amazed by Max, and no one has been able to completely discern how old Max is or how he was manufactured. As I mentioned, Max has actually changed in the nineteen years I have been examining him. The left side of his face—the right side as one looks at him—has cleared greatly over the years due to the many interactions he has had with people. That same side is also not symmetrical with the other. The cheek is larger and the eye socket deeper on the left side. This is more “natural” as human skulls are not symmetrical and further proof that Max was carved by hand and not machined (see Figure 5).

Fig. 4-Jodi Serota with Max. Meta Center, New York. NBC Sci-Fi Television special. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 2008.

In 2006, Max was seen and examined by Boston University geologist and natural scientist Dr. Robert M. Schoch, known for his work in re-dating the Great Sphinx of Giza, Egypt with alternative Egyptologist John Anthony West. Schoch is the one who identified that Max was made from a complex of five separate pieces of quartz crystal, fused together under tremendous heat and pressure, probably deep inside a volcano millions of years ago. This finding indicated to Dr. Schoch that Max could not have been shaped and

carved by any known modern power tools, as the powerful vibrations would have shattered the crystal into the five separate sections—Max must have been carved by hand, but Schoch could not venture a guess as to how! Schoch also pointed out to JoAnn the two different matrixes in the skull—the matrix is the "seed," or where the crystal began to grow in its infancy. Again, this makes Max unique among all known crystal skulls as the others have exhibited only one matrix from one crystalline source.

Many people have reported an extraterrestrial influence in or around Max, and the other crystal skulls over the years. Of these reports, the overwhelming majority has asserted a connection to the star system of the Pleiades for Max. Many have felt the original crystals that Max was carved from came from the Pleiades, long, long ago. It is also interesting to note that many Mayan wisdom keepers have stated in their mythology that the original Mayan people came from the Pleiades. That Max would wind up as a power tool or object to the ancient Mayans would seem logical in this perspective. Academic science cannot verify or deny these assertions or conclusions and often falls short in being able to adequately deal with this type of artifact—too many academic scientists are hopelessly stuck in their limited paradigms about ancient peoples or cultures.

Fig. 5-Max, the Texas Crystal Skull. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 2001.

As noted in the previous chapter, both Max and Sha-Na-Ra, Nick Nocerino's crystal skull, were brought to the British Museum in 1996 to be tested and examined for a BBC Special. Also tested were the British Museum Skull, a large, hollow quartz crystal skull in possession of the Smithsonian Institution, a modern-carved small quartz crystal skull carved in Germany, a small Aztec quartz crystal skull known as the "Reliquary Cross Skull" from Mexico and a small quartz crystal skull from the British Museum (see Figure 6). The tests were conducted by Margaret Sax, a materials expert at the British Museum. The Smithsonian was represented by Jane Walsh, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, who did not do any testing or examination of her own, but was simply there to observe the proceedings.

Fig. 6-Crystal skulls tested by British Museum for BBC Television special. From left to right: the British Museum Skull, Max (the Texas Crystal Skull), Aztec crystal goblet, the Smithsonian Crystal Skull, a contemporary crystal skull from Germany, the Reliquary Cross Crystal Skull (Aztec), a small contemporary crystal skull, and Sha-Na-Ra (the Nocerino Crystal Skull). Photo by JoAnn Parks. 1996.

The British Museum staff performed many tests on all the skulls, including scanning electron microscopy and making cast molds on the teeth to search for evidence of modern tool marks. When the results were made available, the British Museum announced that their skull was modern—in opposition to the study they did in 1936—and the Smithsonian skull and some of the others were also modern, carved with diamond tools and contemporary polishing equipment, which could be determined by examining the skulls under the electron microscope. The use of modern tools is reflected in high resolution as even and straight lines of polish and cutting, while the same work done by

hand is indicated by uneven and ragged cut lines. But when it came time to announce the results of the scans and tests on Max and Sha-Na-Ra, JoAnn Parks reports that they uncharacteristically stated, “No comment!” What can this nebulous statement, no comment, have possibly meant? That they could not detect modern tool marks or polishing, that they could not declare these two crystal skulls were carved in recent times—but that they would not go against their strict academic paradigms that there were no ancient cultures capable of producing them, so they could not declare them as genuine, ancient artifacts?

Jane Walsh of the Smithsonian Institution has been blatantly dishonest in her public statements about these tests. In interviews in the press and on the Smithsonian’s website in recent years, she has declared, “We discovered that all of the crystal skulls had been carved with modern coated lapidary wheels using industrial diamonds and polished with modern machinery.” JoAnn Parks has clearly stated that Jane Walsh was just in London to oversee the tests and did not do any examination or tests on Max herself. Why did Jane Walsh not state that the British Museum’s own scientists had no comment on the tests performed on Max and Sha-Na-Ra? This information is quite available in the video of the special produced by the BBC, of which I have a copy! In a *Washington Post* article written on Sunday, November 20, 2005 by staff writer Peter Carlson, there is another quote from Jane Walsh. The article states, “Jane MacLaren Walsh, a Smithsonian anthropologist, studied several skulls, **including Max** [emphasis mine], and concluded that they were all made after 1850.” Walsh then states, “They were carved with modern lapidary equipment. Max is as modern as the rest.”

First of all, Walsh gives the erroneous impression that she studied and tested Max at the Smithsonian. This is absolutely false as Max has **never** been to the Smithsonian and has never been personally examined and tested by Jane Walsh! She has never mentioned in the press or in public statements that the British Museum had no comment and produced no test results that “proved” either Max or Sha-Na-Ra was carved with modern equipment. The fact is that Jane Walsh had no idea what she was looking at, or even a clue as to what Max is about or how he was carved. The examinations and subsequent conclusions reached by me as a trained archaeologist, or Dr. Robert M. Schoch as a credentialed geologist, differ vastly from those of Jane Walsh, who is obviously unable to see past her limited academic paradigms concerning ancient cultures and civilizations. But she is the one oft quoted in

the media denouncing crystal skulls as “hoaxes.”

Many people have also reported receiving healings either directly from Max or just from being in his presence. Various individuals have stated that their lives have been changed or dramatically altered by Max, and all of these individuals have reported the changes were for the positive. I am one of these people; Max has also acted as a matchmaker, having brought my wife, Theresa, and me together in 1997 at a gathering with JoAnn Parks in Boulder, Colorado. Max told me he brought us together because we had important work to do together (see Figure 7). Theresa and I have each written two books since we have been together (this is the third for me) and each has aided the other tremendously in this effort. I could not have written my two books on ancient Egypt, and she her two novels, without each others’ love, support and Max’s help. The things experienced by us and the many others who have reported the positive changes and healings in their lives, either directly or indirectly from Max’ energy and influence, are much more important in the long run than the cynicism and narrow-minded proclamations from some academics.

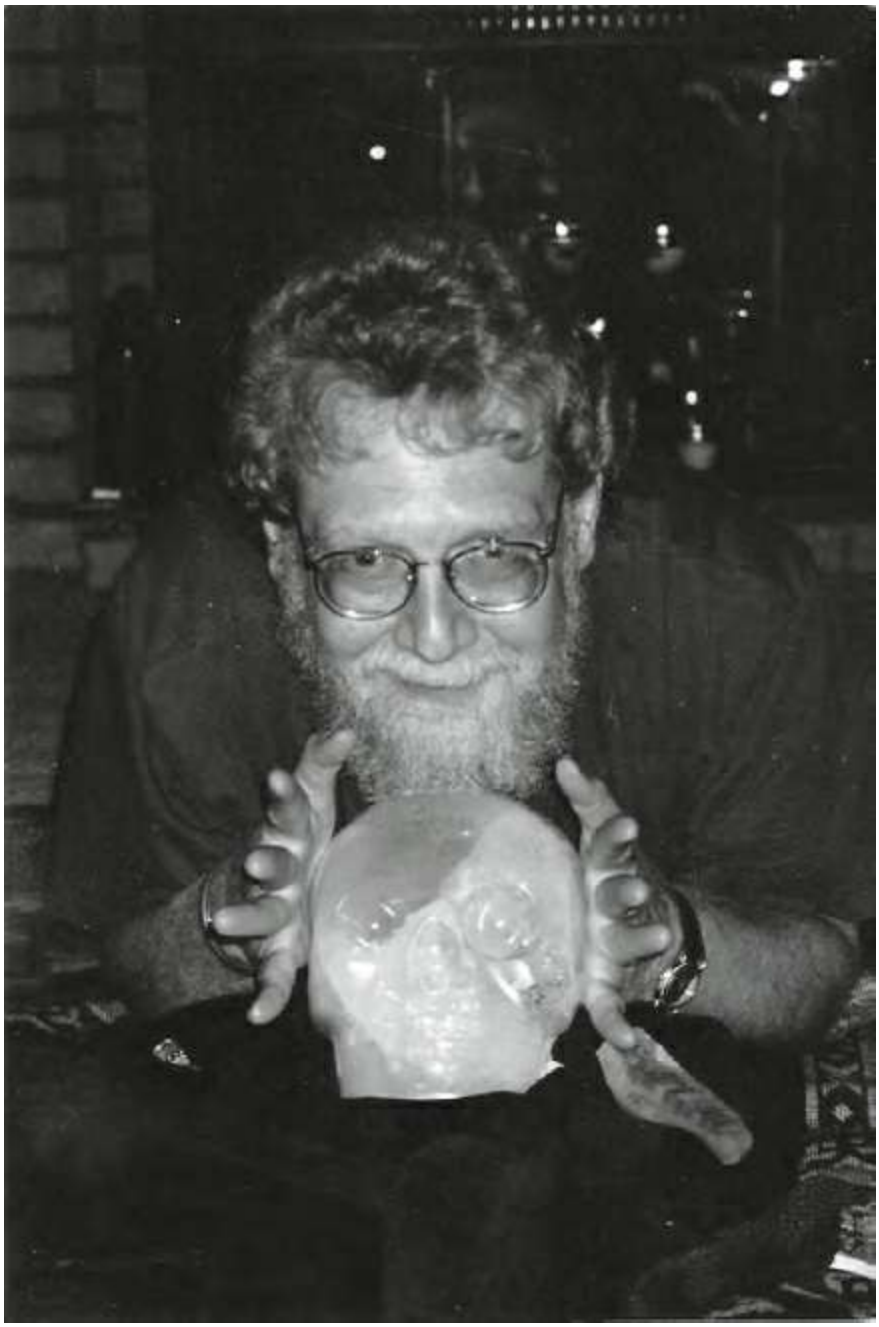


Fig. 7-Stephen Mehler with Max. Boulder, CO. Photo by Joseph Swanson. 1997.

In 2006, we put on a presentation at the Solstice Institute in Boulder, Colorado with JoAnn Parks and Max, and Jonathan Goldman and his wife, Andi Goldman (see Figure 8). Jonathan is an internationally known musician, teacher and master sound healer. Jonathan led all of us in powerful chanting and toning with Max and other crystal skulls. This was a perfect example of crystal, especially crystal skulls, being activated by sound. The evening was a profound and uplifting experience for all who attended the event.

At this writing, JoAnn Parks is co-authoring a book about her story and life with Max over the past thirty odd years. It will be a story well due and a must read for anyone interested in Max or crystal skulls. JoAnn has been presenting Max to the public for over twenty-one years and will document specific healings that have occurred in Max's presence. A few years ago, Max told me that his "name" derives from a Mayan term, IMAX (pronounced "Ee-mash"). I have asked several people versed in the Mayan language the meaning, but none has been able to translate the term properly. I believe the term was used as a title by the very ancient Mayan shamans and may have different meanings in recent times. Max also said to me the Spanish speaking people in Mexico gave him the title *El Viejo*, "The Old One," and that the Mayan term IMAX was related to age and wisdom. But the key to me was that Max was saying where his English name or title was derived from: IMAX, I, Max!

Fig. 8-Andi and Jonathan Goldman with Max. Solstice Institute, Boulder, CO. Photo by Stephen Mehler. 2006.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

Its not where it's at that is most important,
but where it's not at.
—Bob Dylan

After over twenty-eight years of research into the subject of crystal skulls, I am constantly reminded of some thoughts that Nick Nocerino left with me. Nick invested almost seventy years of his life actively interested in this subject, and over sixty years of experience actually seeing, evaluating and researching crystal skulls. Nick wrote to me in 1999 and stated: "Be careful of people who can look at any skull and immediately say they are ancient. All crystal has energy. Only carvings are what are ancient. Crystals are very ancient!" (see Figure 1). This statement deals goes to the heart of the matter that both Nick and I considered important in an archaeological sense—how do we determine the status of a crystal skull?

Although there have been reports in recent years that have claimed that there are now methods developed to date the formation of crystals, this is not yet universally accepted in science. Even if this were so, there is still no concrete scientific way to completely determine when a crystal has been carved into a known object, such as a skull.

Fig. 1-Stephen Mehler and Nick Nocerino. Sedona, Arizona. Photo by Theresa L. Crater. 1998.

Radiocarbon dating is useless as quartz crystal is silicon, not carbon based—essential for this method. However, certain modern techniques such as scanning electron microscopy can give us closer and more detailed images of carving methods, and can be useful to determine if an object was carved with, or if there was the use of, modern power tools, polishing equipment and modern cutting indications with use of industrial diamonds. However, even these modern techniques of determination may have flaws, as we will discuss.

A system of classification for dating of artifacts in archaeology was introduced in the late nineteenth century by Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie of Great Britain, which he called “Sequence Dating.” It was an attempt to place an object into a cultural and historical context by style and form. In other words, the colors used, the patterns of decoration, materials used, methods employed and degree of technological expertise are all recorded and noted, and then the object is placed into a “sequence” or historical position according to the same data already collected about known cultures or civilizations. Petrie made mistakes with this system—those mistakes were due to lack of data on prehistoric cultures, not the fault of the system. With the advent of modern techniques such as radiocarbon, potassium-argon and other methods based on the rates of radioactive isotope decay, sequence dating fell out of favor and is rarely used today.

However, since many crystal skulls first seemed to appear, especially in

Europe, in the mid to late nineteenth century, sequence dating was the only method available to early researchers and scientists. Since most, if not all, of these crystal skulls were originally coming out of tombs located in Mexico and Central America, all of the early crystal skulls that were found and later appeared in Europe were labeled as “Aztec” by the anthropologists and archaeologists who examined them. The limited understanding of these academicians was the flaw, not the system. First of all, “Aztec” was a generic term to begin with—the Aztecs were a confederation of tribes united into an empire by the conquests of a warrior class of indigenous people in Mexico. Two tribes conquered by these warriors were the Mixtecs and Zapotecs, who were tribes of superior artisans and became part of the Aztec confederation. The Mixtecs and Zapotecs were master carvers in jade and quartz crystal, and they were the ones who carved crystal skulls for the Aztec confederation. But most of the skulls they carved were small and had a distinctive style, easily recognized (see Figure 2). The large, adult-human sized crystal skulls that have been labeled “Aztec” do not fit the style and sequence of these small Mixtec and Zapotec crystal skulls, and they are mislabeled and misidentified. My Mayan source, Francisco Reyes, told me quite definitely that according to his tradition the ancient Mayans (or later Aztecs) did not carve any of the large crystal skulls. He indicated the skulls were “gifts from the Gods,” possibly either from an ancient prehistoric civilization or from an extraterrestrial source.

> Then we come to the techniques of scrying, crystal-gazing and psychometry. Used properly and under laboratory conditions, these techniques can be an effective way to deal with historical and prehistorical unknowns. But the key phrase is “used properly and under laboratory conditions”— this must be understood. This leads us to the very popular modern practice of “channeling.” This practice has often been confused and conflated with scrying and psychometry, but is not the same thing. Channeling has become a popular facet of the so-called “New Age,” the recent explosion of interest in things metaphysical in the last thirty plus years. Nick Nocerino loathed the term “New Age.” He wondered how a recent interest in ancient wisdom and practices can be called “New?”

We differentiate between psychometry, scrying and channeling. Psychometry is conducted in a laboratory or similar environment, quiet and controlled, and with distinct procedures. There is usually a period of attunement with psychometry, scrying and crystal-gazing; as previously mentioned, deep-breathing, toning and chanting, use of light and color are all tested attunement methods that have been utilized successfully in research with crystal skulls. Channeling, as practiced by many, is accomplished without any attunement, preparation or environment concerns— many people who channel just spontaneously begin to present "information" about any object or person, supposedly from "spirit," or from other physical or non-physical sources. I have often stated that channeling, especially in the absence of any other corroborating sources of evidence, should be taken with large "doses of salt." If the information resonates with one's own **knowing**, then it may be useful, but if not, a great deal of emphasis is not recommended. The reliability of the information is quite doubtful.

Fig. 2-Aztec Crystal Skull. Musee de L’homme. Paris, France.

When utilizing psychometry in a laboratory setting, multiple subjects are involved, and detailed questionnaire results can be compared for similar responses. What is considered scientifically significant are results with high percentages of similar “hits”—many people reporting the same or similar events, scenes, people, time frames, sounds, colors, etc. This is usually not done with people who channel esoteric information. If information or data collected cannot be verified, confirmed, affirmed or repeated—which is the very essence of science—then what good is it but just for entertainment?

This is the case today concerning channeled information some people say comes from crystal skulls. There are people who channel at the drop of a hat, without any attunement or preparation, and who don’t even have to be in the presence of an actual skull in order to do so. Now, it must be conceded that this is certainly possible, but some sort of control does make the information

“cleaner.” Without controls or repeatability, there is no way to tell if a person is just talking off the top of their head. For instance, there have been stories circulated over the years—channeled information—that some of the crystal skulls are actual ancient human skulls that were crystallized in ancient civilizations using some unknown technology. This story has been particularly circulated about the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. It was reported in a book in the 1980s that a channel, someone who was never in the presence of the crystal skull, stated that the Mitchell-Hedges Skull was that of an Atlantean priestess whose skull was crystallized to honor her many thousands of years ago. No one else ever reported this before the 1980s, but now that the story has been around, others have agreed! How can this information possibly be confirmed? The existence of an “Atlantis” cannot even be established beyond doubt, notwithstanding an unknown crystalline technology that could transform bone into crystal!

When asked of this possibility in an interview in 1986, I naively answered that it could be possible, but I had not yet seen or experienced the Mitchell-Hedges Skull for myself. After spending time with and examining the Hedges Skull in 1988, I totally rejected this channeled information. The Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull is an exquisitely carved, excellent anatomical representation of a human skull, but one versed in human anatomy would easily discern that there are gross major and minor anatomical errors in the carving— the Zygomatic Arches (the cheekbones), for instance, are not anatomically accurate at all. Some channels counter this argument by saying that the “process” of transmutation of a human skull into a crystal skull “changes” the anatomical structure. Anyone can play with words and delve into mental gymnastics to attempt to establish an idea, but what good does it serve if the rest of us do not “see” the same thing? I have also recently been told by a “channel” that Max, the Texas Crystal Skull—on whom I have spent over 100 hours of research—is also an ancient human skull that was crystallized. This statement is from someone who has never seen or experienced Max. Anyone who has spent any significant time doing so would know this idea is extreme nonsense!

This whole diatribe was in support of the opening statement by Nick

Nocerino to me in 1999 about being careful of anyone who would say a crystal skull is ancient without any serious study and testing. Even crystal skulls that have been tested may produce mixed results and elicit different opinions—and opinions and conclusions that were reached concerning a certain crystal skull may change over time with added information. Such seems to be the case, at least for some of us, concerning the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. The most written about and famous of all the crystal skulls, the Mitchell-Hedges Skull is also the most controversial. Anna Mitchell-Hedges, the adopted daughter of F.A. "Mike" Mitchell-Hedges, inherited the crystal skull upon her father's death in 1959. Up until the mid to late 1960s, she had never uttered a public word or written anything about the artifact. In 1968, Anna Mitchell-Hedges swore an affidavit to Frank Dorland, to whom she had loaned the skull for study and appraisal, that she had found the crystal skull in 1926 at the site of *Lubaantun*, in British Honduras, but did not exactly say when (see Figure 3). She claimed she found the upper skull buried beneath an altar which had been covered by fallen rocks, and the detachable jaw was found nearby three months later. She claimed her father, Dr. Thomas K. Gann, Lady Richmond Brown and Captain T. A. Joyce witnessed the find. Anna Mitchell-Hedges passed away in 2007, but before she did she changed her story several times.

In his autobiography *Danger My Ally*, Mitchell-Hedges himself only devoted thirteen lines of text to what would have been one of the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century, and he never disclosed how he obtained the skull. The American version of his autobiography had the mention of the crystal skull in the back of the book with a picture of it added that was not in the original. In the book Mitchell-Hedges referred to the crystal skull as the "Skull of Doom," a title he borrowed from an African tribe that had nothing to do with "his" crystal skull. He also refused to state exactly how he acquired the skull, never mentioning that his daughter found it on site. Appearing on BBC Radio programs in the late '40s and early '50s, Mitchell-Hedges neither mentioned his daughter finding the skull nor even being with him on site.

When I heard Anna Mitchell-Hedges lecture with the crystal skull in 1988, the story had changed. She was then telling the story that she found the upper skull just sitting partially exposed in the dirt, and no great moving of stones was necessary for her to uncover it—and that all this occurred exactly on her seventeenth birthday! As it was revealed that her birthday was January 1,

1907, she was then stating the find was made in 1924. Up until her death, she swore this was the true story even though she had signed an affidavit to Dorland in 1968 stating she found the skull in 1926 and never mentioned her birthday!

17th February, 1968

Mr. F N Dorland,
Messrs Dorlands,
280 Panoramic Highway,
Mill Valley.
California.94943

The Rock Crystal Skull first appeared during our expedition to Lubaantum in 1926. We went during 1926, and left before the rainy season in 1927.

We found the building, and were digging in the temple, moving a heavy wall which had fallen on the altar. This took some time because the rocks were so heavy we could only move about 6 a day and left completely exhausted.

I came upon the Skull buried beneath the altar, but it was some three months later before the jaw was found which was about 25 feet away.

On this expedition ws:

Father (dec)
Myself
Jane Moulson (dec) Father's secretary.
Capt. Joyce (dec) British Museum
Dr. Gann
Lady Richmond Brown (dec)

A. Mitchell-Hedges

(sgd)

Fig. 3-Affadavit signed by Anna Mitchell-Hedges. 1968.

A quick historical analysis revealed her second story, that of finding the skull on her seventeenth birthday in 1924, to be a complete fabrication. The site later named *Lubaantun*, "The Place of Fallen Stones," by Gann and Mitchell-Hedges (which was not an indigenous Mayan name of the site), was only initially surveyed and located by Mayan archaeologist J. Eric Thompson and Gann in the early '20s. Gann had spent many years in British Honduras and had surveyed many possible Mayan sites for Great Britain. Mitchell-Hedges may have found the site many years before but he was not there with Gann in early 1924. The Gann Expedition, as it was called (not the Mitchell-Hedges Expedition), did not start its full excavation of the site until early 1925.

Of all the photographs Anna Mitchell-Hedges showed us at her presentation in Scottsdale, Arizona in 1988—many of which did show her accompanying her father to Central America in her twenties—there was not one image of her at the site of Lubaantun or anywhere in British Honduras, today known as Belize. There was no photo of the crystal skull *in situ*—at the site—or of her ever holding the skull or even of her **with** the crystal skull before the 1960s. When I questioned her about this, in front of the audience, she replied that a canoe had overturned in a river on their return from the site and many photos were lost. But she showed many pictures of her father at Lubaantun, with all his companions listed as being part of the expedition (Anna Mitchell-Hedges was not on any list or record of the expedition). Conveniently, the only photos that were lost were those that could have proved she was there in 1926-7, and those of the crystal skull supposedly found there!

As mentioned, the first documented historical reference to this crystal skull was in the 1936 study that included the British Museum Skull. The crystal skull was then known as "The Burney Skull" as it was in the possession of London art dealer Sydney Burney. Burney himself never revealed how he had obtained the skull and never mentioned F.A. Mitchell-Hedges in any published reference to the skull. It was only Anna Mitchell-Hedges' word that Sydney Burney had obtained the skull from her father for collateral on a

loan, or that her father had left it with him for “security” reasons while he went back to Central America. Burney never corroborated any of these statements, and Anna Mitchell-Hedges never presented any paperwork or documents of this alleged transaction. Burney put the crystal skull up for auction at Sotheby’s in London in 1943 even though Mitchell-Hedges was in England at the time and should have been given the opportunity to reacquire it—if they were such good friends! Burney withdrew the skull when the bids were not what he wanted, and contrary to what has been written elsewhere, Mike Mitchell-Hedges did not bid on the skull. Mitchell-Hedges bought the crystal skull from Sydney Burney for 400 pounds sterling in 1944—only then does it become the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull. There is no recorded mention or documentation of it ever being in Mitchell-Hedges’ possession before that date or when Mitchell-Hedges mentioned it in his autobiography in 1954.

Dr. Thomas K. Gann, a medical doctor who headed up the expedition to British Honduras in 1925 for the British Museum (not Mike Mitchell-Hedges), was a fair amateur archaeologist, and listed all the finds in the expedition. He never mentioned the find of a crystal skull or Anna Mitchell-Hedges ever being on site. Lady Richmond Brown, who financed the expedition, and Captain T.A. Joyce, who led the way, both wrote books about the expedition to Lubaantun in later years, and neither of them ever mentioned the find of a crystal skull or Anna Mitchell-Hedges either being a part of the team or ever being at the site. Several books have been written offering various explanations for this omission, but none makes any archaeological sense. If the crystal skull was found at the site by way of any of the several accounts that Anna Mitchell-Hedges had related, then **all** would have rejoiced in the find, and would have taken photographs and recorded the event in all their later accounts. To say Mitchell-Hedges was a British spy, as has been written by Sibley Morrill, or that the others were not present at the find and Mitchell-Hedges wanted to keep it secret are extreme stretches in the real world of archaeology. No one else has supported her story and no real provenance of the find has been established by anyone. Mitchell-Hedges’ convoluted autobiography contained many suspicious statements. He displayed grandiose showmanship in blatantly advertising the crystal skull as “The Skull of Doom” in the later 1940s and in the book. As I have noted, he borrowed that epithet from an African tribe that had nothing to do with the crystal skull.

Anna Mitchell-Hedges herself may have engaged in a deliberate fraud that can now be exposed. She had her father's autobiography republished in 1995. As mentioned, in this American version Anna had added a picture of the crystal skull with the caption that she found it on her seventeenth birthday—Mitchell-Hedges himself never stated any such thing! Between pages 96 and 97, another photo was added with a caption that claims that the girl in the picture is Anna Mitchell-Hedges at age eleven and a half with a Mayan boy with hookworm disease, and that she had lived with the Maya. This photo was not in the 1954 UK original. Upon examination, this photo could not possibly have been of Anna Mitchell-Hedges. This photo was first introduced as being her in the book *The Skull Speaks,* published in 1985. This book consists mainly of channeled material by Carole Davis, a good friend of Anna Mitchell-Hedges. The photo appears on p. 61 of *The Skull Speaks* and is labeled the same as in the American version of *Danger My Ally.* In 2002, Nick Nocerino showed me the exact same photograph in the book *Blue Blaze* written by Jane Harvey Houlson (Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1934); the caption said it was a young Mayan boy with hookworm disease but said nothing about the girl in the photo. Jane Houlson was Mike Mitchell-Hedges' secretary and had accompanied him on several expeditions to the Bay Islands off the coast of British Honduras. If the picture had been taken many years earlier—it would have to have been in 1918 if it was Anna Mitchell-Hedges at age eleven— Jane Houlson, as Mitchell-Hedges' employee, would have mentioned in 1934, when Anna was 27 years old, that the photo was of Anna. Anna Mitchell-Hedges was in Canada in 1918 and was not adopted by Mitchell-Hedges until a few years later, when he was in New York. Anna Mitchell-Hedges could not have possibly lived with the Maya **before** she was adopted by him. This could be said to be a documented fraud perpetrated by Anna Mitchell-Hedges to create the fantasy that she had been at Lubaantun, had lived with the Maya, and found the crystal skull in the 1920s. This, along with the doubted veracity of Mitchell-Hedges' claims and the multiple inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the many versions that Anna Mitchell-Hedges presented from 1968 to 2007, casts serious doubt about all aspects of

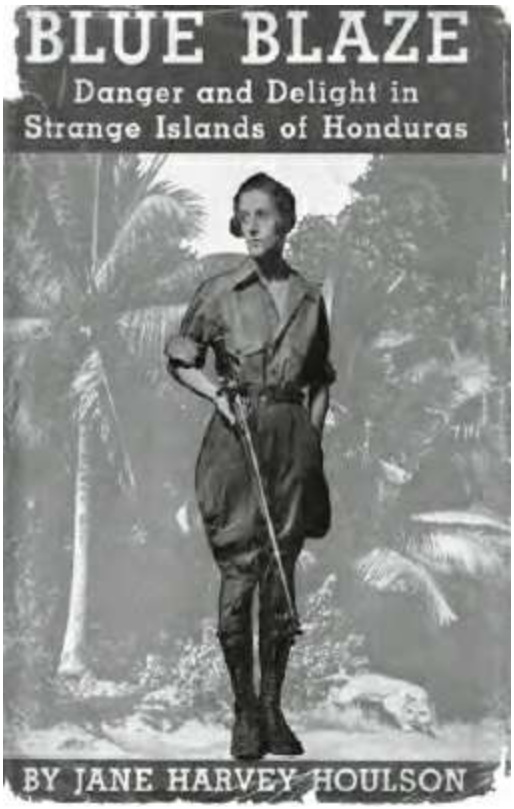
the “official” story of the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull.

Enormously distended abdomen of child suffering from hookworm.

The photo and caption from between pages 144-145 of Jane Harvey Houlson’s 1934 book *Blue Blaze*.

When Nick Nocerino studied the Mitchell-Hedges Skull in 1985 and presented his conclusions in an interview in 1986 (that was printed in the book he co-authored in 1988), he felt the skull was ancient due to the tremendous energy and information that was flowing in and around the crystal. When I experienced the Mitchell-Hedges Skull in 1988, I also felt tremendous energy, saw many scenes within the skull, and felt it was an ancient artifact. In the 1990s and early 2000s, both Nick and I changed our minds. I began to have my doubts because of the carving itself: it was a priceless work of art, exquisitely done in a high-grade clear optical-grade rock quartz crystal, seemingly flawlessly polished. None of the other ancient crystal skulls shared these traits. But both the 1936 study by the British Museum and the Hewlett-Packard tests initiated by Frank Dorland in 1970 had indicated that there was no evidence of either metal tool work or modern polishing techniques—but were they right? Neither I, nor Nick Nocerino,

ever saw the reports by Hewlett-Packard themselves—I sure would like to—we have only the word of Frank Dorland about the results of these tests. Anna Mitchell-Hedges refused to have the skull retested by the British Museum in 1996, stating “enough” testing had been done. But surely after twenty-six years the use of electron microscopy and other techniques would have vastly improved, so why would she not allow the skull to be retested and affirmed as ancient? Now that the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull is in the possession of someone who wants to promote it, it certainly could be available for retesting with up-to-date equipment—and I know just the laboratory that could do it!



In southwest Germany, in the Hunsruck region of the Birkenfeld district of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate, lies the city of Idar-Oberstein. Once the separate cities of Idar and Oberstein, the two were united in 1933. Idar-Oberstein is known today as one of the great gemstone centers of all Europe, and has been one of the leading areas of the gem and jewelry business for over 150 years. In fact, in the 1850s Oberstein was the leading place in the world for sources of agate and jasper, and for modern quartz crystal carving. With early Prussian (German) incursions into Brazil in the nineteenth century, a new market opened up. Great quantities of all varieties of quartz

crystal were found there and in other parts of South America. This material flowed into Idar and Oberstein to be carved into many different objects. Nick Nocerino went to Idar-Oberstein himself in the 1990s and found the quality of quartz carving done there today, and especially that done in the middle of the nineteenth century, to be the finest he had ever seen—and to be comparable to the quality of the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull.

Fig. 4-Nick Nocerino. Lubaantun, Belize. 1995.

Nick Nocerino also took a trip to Belize in 1995 and visited the site of Lubaantun (see Figure 4). It was an interesting journey but Nick reported he found no information from the locals that either the crystal skull was ever found there in the 1920s or that Anna Mitchell-Hedges had been there then. By 1999, Nick Nocerino had come to the conclusion that the Mitchell-Hedges Skull was old, but not ancient—that it had been carved in Idar-Oberstein, Germany in the 1850s or ‘60s and may have been taken to Central America by German adventurers, after which it possibly found its way to the Mayans. Nick further elaborated on his conclusions to me in 2001—that the quartz crystal that the skull was carved from came from an ancient, pure clear vein of quartz crystal that had tremendous innate energy. The skull was carved in Germany, but later brought to Central America where the Mayans somehow obtained the skull and used it in ritual with some of the genuine, ancient crystal skulls like Max, the Rose Quartz Crystal Skull or Sha-Na-Ra.

Nick felt these skulls downloaded ancient scenes and information into the "Hedges" skull.

Now this may sound as fantastic as Anna Mitchell-Hedges story itself, but it is what Nick believed. We do know that ancient crystal skulls can act as a mainframe computer that can download data into any other "raw" crystal as "remotes" or laptops. This could explain why initially Nick and I and many others could see such ancient scenes in the skull—this may not have been original information that the skull witnessed, but had been incorporated into the crystal from other more ancient crystal sources. This is what Nick Nocerino believed before he passed away—and I know from experience to never dismiss what Nick believed out of hand. We cannot "prove" this to be the case but we do know that it is possible. I actually argued against this conclusion with Nick Nocerino in 1999 when he first proposed to me that the Mitchell-Hedges Skull could have been carved in Idar-Oberstein in the mid nineteenth century. I countered that there was no direct evidence that crystal skulls had ever been carved there. But he did not waver from his final conclusion and was even more convinced when we discussed it again in 2001 and 2002 (see Figure 5).

The fact of the matter is that almost all of the crystal skulls discussed in this book do not have accurate or documented provenance. Our sources told us the Mayan Crystal Skull was found in a tomb in Guatemala, near Honduras, in 1912 by the Montano family, but there is no proof of this. The Amethyst Crystal Skull was said by the same sources to have been found in a tomb in the Oaxaca area of Mexico at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was reported to have been used as a paperweight on the desk of Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz in 1910. It has even been reported that a picture exists of Diaz with the skull—but no such picture or evidence of this has ever been produced. Max, the Texas Crystal Skull, was reported to have been found in a tomb in 1924 in Guatemala, but no proof of this exists. It is the same with the other crystal skulls, except Sha-Na-Ra, the Nocerino Crystal Skull, which was found in an excavation in Mexico in 1995, but because of legalities involved, detailed evidence of this find has never been produced, either.

Fig. 5-Stephen Mehler and Nick Nocerino. Sedona, Arizona. Photo by Theresa L. Crater. 2001.

It may be that all the preceding material about provenance and the “true” stories of the crystal skulls is really irrelevant. The fact is the crystal skulls are a real and current phenomenon that academic science falls far short of fully understanding.All who work with crystal skulls admit they are powerful tools to interact with and can affect human consciousness, and that these effects are very real to those who experience them.

As for bringing the crystal skulls up to date—the Mayan Crystal Skull was given to a lawyer in Brownsville, Texas in 1980 as collateral for a loan; the loan was defaulted on, and the Mayans lost possession of the skull. In my last conversation with Nick Nocerino in 2002, he said he had “lost track” of this skull and believed it had returned to Mexico. We do not know where it is in the present day. The Amethyst Crystal Skull was also given as collateral on a loan to an art gallery in San Jose, California in 1983, and this loan was also defaulted on. This skull has been tracked by some researchers, and has been reported to be in either Las Vegas, Nevada, or still in San Jose, California, in private hands. It is reported to be on sale with an exorbitant price tag that has not attracted many bids. It has not been on display or been available to interact with groups of people since the 1980s. Max travels with JoAnn Parks continually every year and is the most available and accessible of all the ancient crystal skulls. Sha-Na-Ra is still owned by the Nocerino family and has also been accessible in recent years for many people to see and experience. There are also many contemporary or even old skulls that have

been made available to the public, although some may question the values and ethics of people who would charge a fee to experience a contemporary crystal skull.

If, as Nick Nocerino stated, all crystal is ancient and capable of strong interaction with human consciousness, and can effect healings and other positive changes—and all crystals can download information and energy from ancient crystal skulls—then what is the use in being concerned about“ genuine ancient crystal skulls?” The importance to Nick Nocerino and myself was to establish a scientific and metaphysical system of identifying and testing crystal skulls to somewhat determine if they were indeed ancient artifacts—certainly important to me as an archaeologist and prehistorian—and not to depend on pseudo-researchers or channels who determine authenticity and the status of “ancient” on a whim, or ego, or downright dishonesty. Nick Nocerino was very concerned about the downright dishonesty of some so-called “channels” and “crystal skull experts.” It is often up to one’s own level and degree of discernment as the final judge in this area. The only true conclusions are that crystal skulls are real, not all “phony” modern carvings, and they are here to interact with, affect and raise human consciousness.

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